U.S & Israel - UNSC voting

Why in news?

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The Obama administration allowed the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to adopt a resolution that condemned Israeli settlement construction.

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What is UNSC?

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- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal organs of the UN, charged with the maintenance of international peace and security as well as accepting new members to the United Nations and approving any changes to its United Nations Charter.
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- It consists of fifteen members. Russia, the United Kingdom, France, People's Republic of China and the United States serve as the five permanent members. They can veto any substantive Security Council resolution.
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- The Security Council also has 10 non-permanent members, elected on a regional basis to serve two-year terms. The current non-permanent members are Angola, Egypt, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, Uruguay and Venezuela.
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What was the resolution?

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- Israel for decades has pursued a policy of constructing Jewish settlements on territory captured by Israel in a 1967 war with its Arab neighbours including the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.
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- Most countries view Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and East

Jerusalem as illegal and an obstacle to peace.
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- The resolution had been put forward by Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal and Venezuela.
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- In the resolution, the Council reiterated its demand that Israel “immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and that it fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard”.
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- The 15-nation Council adopted on Friday the resolution by a vote of 14 in favour.
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- In a rare step the **United States abstained**, enabling the adoption of the first UN resolution since 1979 to condemn Israel over its settlement policy.
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Why did U.S abstain?

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- The action follows growing US frustration over the unrelenting construction of Jewish settlements on land Palestinians want for a future independent state.
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- The US broke with the long-standing American approach of shielding Israel, which receives more than $3 billion in annual US military aid, from such action.
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- The US abstention was a result of failed efforts to forge a peace agreement based on a “two-state” solution of creating a Palestinian state existing peacefully alongside Israel.
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- US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power said that US did not veto it because the resolution “reflects the facts on the ground and is consistent with US policy across Republican and Democratic administrations.”
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What is the outcome?

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- The resolution formally enshrined the international community’s disapproval of Israeli settlement building.
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- While the resolution contains no sanctions, it could widen the possibility of prosecution at the International Criminal Court (ICC).
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- It could encourage some countries to impose sanctions against Israeli settlers and products produced in the settlements.
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What are the shortcomings?

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- The resolution has more symbolic value and is unlikely to change the situation on ground between Israel and Palestine.
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- The PM of Israel called the resolution anti-Israel and will not abide by its terms.
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- The President-elect Trump is likely to be a staunch supporter of Israel’s right-wing policies.
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- The upcoming U.S. ambassador to Israel also rejects “two nation theory”. Therefore the future is not clear as of now, regarding peace between Israel and Palestine.
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