United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 11, 2015

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell and Speaker Ryan:

We write to oppose the inclusion of language in the fiscal year 2016 omnibus appropriations bill to restore U.S. funding for the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The proposed language would undermine over two decades of U.S. policy against funding U.N. organizations that admit the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) or other non-state actors as members. The Department of State formally requested inclusion of the proposed language in a letter dated December 7, 2015.

Under U.S. laws passed in 1990 and 1994, the United States is required to withhold funding to any U.N. organization that grants membership to the Palestine Liberation Organization or "any organization or group that does not have the internationally recognized attributes of statehood." After UNESCO admitted "Palestine" as a member in October 2011, the United States accordingly withheld funding from UNESCO.

We note on several occasions, most recently in the February 2015 jury decision for *Sokolow v. PLO* in a New York Federal District Court, U.S. courts have found the PLO to be liable for hundreds of millions in damages for supporting terrorist attacks that killed and injured Americans.

The proposed language also creates a deeply troubling precedent. U.N. organizations, which seek to follow UNESCO's example and grant membership to non-state actors, may be encouraged to do so believing that the United States would eventually create another exception for them and restore withheld U.S. funding.

Neither the House Committee-passed nor Senate Committee-passed appropriations bills included this proposed language. We oppose inclusion of this language in the FY2016 omnibus appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Mark Kirk
United States Senator

Marco Rubio
United States Senator

CC: The Honorable Thad Cochran
The Honorable Hal Rogers