

Statement by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative, on Agenda Item 37 - 'Question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East' at the United Nations General Assembly on November 30, 2012

Thank you, Mr. President,

At the outset, please allow me to express our appreciation to you for convening this discussion on the Question of Palestine at the General Assembly. I also would like to thank the President of Palestine, H. E. Mahmoud Abbas, for his statement yesterday.

2. I would like to congratulate the leadership and people of Palestine on the upgradation of Palestine's status in the General Assembly to a non-member observer state. While we have long supported the aspirations of the Palestinian people and leadership for the full membership to the United Nations, the vote yesterday in the General Assembly is an important milestone towards that goal.

3. Mr. President, the Arab world has been undergoing unprecedented transformation during the last two years. Democratic aspirations of people in several countries are being addressed through national political processes. It is, however, regrettable that the Palestinian question and the related Arab-Israeli issues have largely remained unaddressed and unresolved. Also, the Palestinian application for full membership of the United Nations submitted more than a year ago has not evinced any positive action from the Security Council, despite overwhelming support from the UN member-states.

4. For more than two years now, there have been no direct talks between Israel and Palestine. Meanwhile, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has been deteriorating due to settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. These activities are creating new realities on the ground, and threaten the very premise of a two-state solution. Settlements, roadblocks and the related infrastructure of occupation have also exacerbated the humanitarian problems of the Palestinian people and are affecting adversely the normal functioning of Palestinian state institutions. The Palestinian Authority is also facing a severe financial crisis that could erode the significant progress made by the Palestinian Authority in building state institutions.

5. The blockade of Gaza has entered its sixth year, and is causing severe hardship to the population. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, and essential services, economic activities and infrastructure development have been disrupted. We strongly condemn the violence and deeply regret the loss of human lives during the recent hostilities. We hope both the parties will uphold the ceasefire agreement and implement its provisions in good faith.

6. Mr. President, we hope that the vote in the General Assembly yesterday will pave the way for the resumption of serious, direct talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis. India has a long history of solidarity with the Palestinian people. India was

the first non-Arab country to recognize the state of Palestine nearly 25 years back. In his message to the friendly people of Palestine on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity, our Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has reiterated India's unwavering support for the Palestinian People's struggle for a sovereign, independent, viable and united state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and internationally recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Arab Peace Initiative, Quartet Road Map and relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

7. In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to reiterate India's continued support for the Palestinian cause.

I thank you.

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