

Statement by Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, Permanent Representative, at the
UN Security Council Open Debate on Situation in the Middle East, including the
Palestinian Question on July 23, 2013

Thank you, Madam President,

Let me begin by expressing our appreciation of the US delegation for convening this quarterly open debate, which will allow the Council to take stock of recent developments in the Middle East, including the State of Palestine. I would like to thank Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry for his comprehensive briefing.

Madam President,

2. We welcome US efforts, including the visits of Secretary of State John Kerry, to re-engage Israel and Palestine in direct talks. We hope that the recent announcement of the two sides to re-start direct talks after perhaps one of the longest period of stalemate since the signing of the Oslo Accords will lead to concrete results.

3. In this context, it is necessary to address the issue of Israeli settlement activities, which have continued unabated and remain a serious obstacle. These activities are not only illegal, but also pose a serious threat to the two-state solution. We join others in urging Israel to stop settlement activities.

4. The blockade of Gaza is also continuing and adversely affecting essential services, economic activities and infrastructure development. While we appreciate measures taken by Israel to allow flow of essential goods into Gaza, these measures cannot be a substitute for lifting the blockade.

5. The Palestinian Authority continues to face one of the worst financial crises that threaten to erode the progress made in building Palestinian state institutions. It is important that international community continue to support financial needs of the Palestine authority.

Madam President,

6. As a member of this Council during 2011-12, India supported Palestine's bid for full and equal membership of the United Nations. Continuing this support, India co-sponsored the General Assembly resolution in November 2012 that upgraded the status of Palestine to a non-member Observer State.

7. India continues to partner with the Palestinian Authority in its socio-economic development, including through the provision of direct budgetary grant, training programmes and IBSA projects.

8. India also continues its consistent support for a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders with East Jerusalem as its capital,

side by side and at peace with Israel as endorsed in various United Nations Resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map. We call on the international community to redouble its efforts for an early resolution of this conflict.

9. Before I conclude, Madam President, let me express our deep concern at the deterioration of the situation in Syria. We look forward to an early holding of the Geneva-2 Conference which should help commence a Syrian-led inclusive political dialogue that resolves the current crisis and meets the legitimate aspirations of all sections of Syrian society. Any further militarization will only exacerbate the conflict and must be avoided by all parties concerned, internal as well as external.

I thank you.

BACK TO SECURITY COUNCIL