

Statement by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri during Briefing on the Middle East (Syria) in UN Security Council on January 31, 2012

Thank you, Mr. President.

At the outset, I would like to thank you for organising this meeting at the request of the League of Arab States. I also take this opportunity to welcome in our midst today the Chair of the League's Ministerial Committee and Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Qatar, His Excellency Bin Jasim Bin Jaber Al Thani, and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Dr. Nabil El-Arabi. I would like to thank them for their comprehensive briefings on the League's efforts to resolve the crisis in Syria. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Syria for his statement. Participation of the US Secretary of State, the Foreign Minister of France, the Foreign Secretary of the UK, the Foreign Ministers of Guatemala, Portugal and Morocco and Minister of State of Federal Foreign Office of Germany in today's meeting testifies to the importance of the subject of our discussion and deserves our appreciation.

2. Mr. President, Chapter VIII of the UN Charter provides for this Council's cooperation with the regional organisations for maintenance of international peace and security. In this context, we welcome today's meeting and think that it provides us a good opportunity to understand the role the League of Arab States is playing in resolution of the problem in Syria.

3. Mr President, the Syrian Arab Republic has historically played an important role in the Middle East by virtue of its geographic and strategic location, its diversity, and the genius of its people. Developments in Syria have implications for peace and stability in the wider region. We have, therefore, called for a peaceful and inclusive political process to address the grievances of all sections of the Syrian society since the beginning of the protests in March 2011. The problem in Syria is not merely security-related; it is primarily political and economic and emanates from the Syrian people's desire to play a greater role in shaping their destiny. Resolution of this problem cannot be found in violence or armed struggle and its violent suppression. Nor can a solution be reached through prescriptions from outside. The Syrian people demand and deserve empowerment so that a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political solution can be found in an atmosphere free of violence and bloodshed.

4. Unfortunately, during the last ten months we have witnessed an increasing level of violence that has taken a heavy toll of civilians and security forces and caused destruction of civilian infrastructure. We unequivocally and strongly condemn all violence irrespective of whoever the perpetrators are and whatever justification is proffered. We also condemn all violations of human rights and rights of expression and peaceful assembly. India holds these rights among the fundamental values that should be respected while ensuring stability and security of the society. India, along with its IBSA partners, conveyed this message clearly to the Syrian leadership when an IBSA delegation visited Damascus in August 2011. This message was also contained in the Council's PRST issued in August 2011 under India's Presidency.

5. We see the efforts of the League of Arab States in Syria in light of our support for a political resolution of the crisis. We had noted that the deployment of the League's Observer Mission across several areas in the country had had a calming effect and are disappointed that the Mission was suspended on 28 January on account of a serious deterioration in the form of continuing violence. The report of the Observer Mission that the League made available to the Security Council clearly states that there is an armed element to the opposition which is also responsible for a number of violent acts. The continued presence and deployment of the Observers could have helped reduce the violence and present a more accurate picture of developments especially since the monitors had also confirmed that a lot of information in the media is exaggerated and misleading. The report of the Observer Mission also made an important point that the mission needs to be accompanied by a political process to address the grievances of the Syrian people, something that we strongly support.

6. Mr President, we are firmly of the view that all sides need to cooperate with the League of Arab States. A political process must begin without any further delay. The process should be led by the Syrians and should respect Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. The League of Arab States, as an important regional organisation, should play its required and historic role in promoting political dialogue among the Syrian parties. This dialogue can build upon the package of political reforms already announced by the Syrian leadership and also bring about necessary changes to the package of political reforms so that it finds acceptance among all sections of the Syrian society. The outcome of this dialogue cannot be prejudged. The outcome should also be acceptable to the widest segment of Syrian society for it to resolve the present crisis and be enduring.

7. Mr President, the international community, including this Council, should play a constructive role in the process of political dialogue among the Syrians. In this

context, we welcome submission of a draft resolution to the Security Council. We will engage with fellow Council members so that the Council can speak with a unanimous voice in support of the initiative of the League of Arab States to expeditiously resolve the Syrian crisis.

Thank you.

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