

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MANJEEV SINGH PURI ACTING PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE ON "THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION" IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON APRIL 21, 2011

Thank you, Mr. President.

I would like to join other colleagues in thanking Under Secretary General Mr Lynn Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements which we have carefully noted.

Mr. President,

2. The situation in the Middle East continues to be grim with no sign of movement in peace talks. The expectation that Quartet would meet on 15th April and come up with a statement to enable both Palestinians and Israelis to resume talks has again not materialized. Lack of movement in even holding of talks is also contributing to increase in violence.

3. Moreover, it is imperative that hopes raised for a Palestinian State during last two years are not lost. The state building efforts of the Palestinian Authority have received commendations from various quarters including financial institutions like IMF and World Bank. The April 2011 report of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process is the latest to endorse the achievements of the Palestinian Authority.

4. The report makes it amply clear that the progress made in rule of law and human rights, livelihoods and productive sectors, education and culture, health, social protection, and infrastructure and water are now sufficient for a functioning government of a State. The Palestinian Authority has, therefore, shown its determination to persist with Prime Minister Fayyad's Plan for achieving statehood. As we approach September 2011, these developments on the governance front should inject a sense of urgency for international efforts to resume peace talks.

Mr. President,

5. The main hindrance for resumption of peace talks is lack of mutual trust. Statements on existence of Israel, emanating from different sections of the Palestinian society, now and then only serve to aggravate this lack of mutual trust. Perception that these statements and continuing rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip against Israel increase the vulnerability of Israel needs to be viewed in this context. The recent spate of violence, including retaliation on Gaza after an attack on a school bus in Southern Israel, clearly shows the divisions that exist. These events deserve our strongest condemnation. We also condemn the killing of abducted Italian national in Gaza last week.

6. While we commend achievements in the territories administered by the Palestinian Authority, it is equally important to note the reason for the deplorable situation in Gaza, where even essentials are difficult to come by. The blockade on Gaza is adversely affecting the population who barely has access to essential commodities. The access of Gaza to essential commodities is imperative as it is also driving militant elements to vent their frustration through violence. Given this situation, humanitarian assistance to Gaza and its delivery should not exacerbate the precarious security situation. It would be prudent if established channels for delivery of humanitarian assistance are used. At the same time these channels must step up the efficacy of their delivery systems and look at stronger and more effective mechanisms for delivering humanitarian assistance.

7. We concur with the sense of the international community that freezing of settlement activity in the Palestinian territories could enable the peace talks to resume. Lack of unity among Palestinian factions is another major issue. We note the recent initiatives aimed at promoting intra-Palestinian unity and hope they would result in a meaningful rapprochement among various Palestinian groups.

8. Equally important are other issues enmeshed to the conflict relating to Arab lands that remain under Israeli occupation. Progress in the Lebanese and Syrian tracks are core to achievement of a comprehensive and durable peace in the region. In a region witnessing protests movements all around, continuing impasse in peace talks could have destabilizing effect on a much larger area. If the peace talks do not recommence quickly, we are afraid, unilateral steps by the parties would only increase the distance between them and further complicate the situation. We, therefore, call on the Quartet members to intensify their collective and individual efforts to break the stalemate.

9. Mr President, India has a long-standing tradition of solidarity with the Palestinian people. India has supported 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 recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Arab Peace initiative, Quartet Roadmap and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

10. India has been contributing to the capacity and institution building of the Palestinian people with its material and technical assistance programmes. India has also extended assistance through IBSA forum. India is also contributing US \$ 1 million to UNRWA continuing our solidarity with the Palestinian people in their pursuit of legitimate goals and quest for development based on dignity and self-reliance.

11. In conclusion, Mr President, let me quote from a letter our first Prime Minister Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru wrote on 11 July 1947 to Albert Einstein. He wrote: "I do not myself see how this problem can be resolved by violence and conflict on one side or the other. Even if such violence and conflict achieve certain ends for the moment, they must necessarily be temporary. I do earnestly hope that some kind of agreement might be arrived at between the Arabs and the Jews. I do not think even an outside power can impose its will for long or enforce some new arrangements against the will of the parties concerned". These words were relevant more than 60 years back. They are even more relevant now. Agreement has to be reached between the parties through direct negotiations for it to be enduring.

12. To that end, we hope, parties will restart talks without further delay. Our expectation is that these talks would lead to a final and comprehensive resolution of the Middle East conflict, which has mired several generations in the region. We all owe to

the future generations that they do not remain mired in this conflict. We, therefore, reiterate our call to both sides to show spirit of flexibility, compromise and political will to reach there.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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