

**Intervention by Mr. S.M. Krishna, External Affairs Minister, at the
Ministerial Meeting of the NAM Committee, on Palestine - Tehran [Iran]**

August 28, 2012

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

At the outset, let me thank the NAM Committee on Palestine for organizing this Ministerial Meeting. As you may recall, this meeting was originally scheduled earlier this month in Ramallah to demonstrate solidarity with the Palestinian people. Unfortunately, Israel prevented the meeting on the grounds that some members do not have relations with Israel. The NAM Committee had aptly condemned this blatant action of Israel in strong terms.

The Palestinian cause is of paramount importance to India. In fact, India was the first non-Arab country to recognize the State of Palestine on 16 November 1988, pursuant to the Algiers Declaration of 15 November 1988.

We believe that the conflict in West Asia is essentially political in nature and cannot be resolved by force. In line with our support for UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, India supports a negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its Capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap and UNSC Resolutions 1397 & 1515. In addition, we have also supported the Arab Peace Initiative.

Mr. Chairman,

India has always extended its unwavering support to the Palestinian cause in international fora. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in his address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2011 announced that India looks forward to welcoming Palestine as an equal member of the United Nations. When I visited Ramallah in January this year, I, too, reiterated India's firm resolve to continue to support the Palestinian nationhood.

The Government and people of India eagerly look forward to the visit of President Mahmoud Abbas to India next month.

India has called for an end to illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and for an early and significant easing of restrictions on the free movement of persons and goods within Palestine. The continuing settlement activities in West Bank and East Jerusalem are threatening the basic premises of the two-state solution. We think that freezing of illegal settlement activities by Israel should be the first step for resumption of direct talks.

Settlement activities have also exacerbated the humanitarian problems of the Palestinian people with increasing violence and aggravation of tension between the settlers and the Palestinian population. We, therefore, reiterate our call to Israel to stop all settlement activities.

Mr. Chairman,

India has been providing developmental support and assistance to Palestine. The assistance includes capacity building measures and support for the development of human resources. We would be regularly exploring ways to further enhance our developmental support to Palestine.

The political upheavals in the Middle East and North Africa and some other factors have unfortunately pushed the Middle East Peace Process to the background. We support the revival of the Peace Process. We had welcomed the 'direct talks' between the Israelis and the Palestinians. However, informal talks over the last two years have not resulted so far in any substantive progress towards resumption of direct talks.

In line with their commitment to democratic values and principles, reconciliation in Palestine is welcome. We hope that these efforts will bear fruit soon, leading to the formation of a Unity Government, holding of elections, re-unification of Palestinian state institutions and measures for reconstruction and development of Palestinian society.

Let me reiterate that India continues to support the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to an independent State living side by side and in peace and security with Israel.

We are hopeful that this collective endeavour of NAM will send a strong signal to all concerned and will lead to revival of the peace process to achieve a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East.

BACK TO NAM STATEMENTS