



Statement by Mr. V.K. Nambiar, Permanent Representative on The Situation between Iraq and Kuwait at the Security Council on February 18, 2003

Mr. President,

Since this is the first time we are making a statement in the Security Council in the month of February, please allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency. I would also like to thank you for providing the general membership an opportunity to express themselves on this important issue. Your stewardship of the Security Council comes at a time when the Council is required to consider some of the most critical and complex issues arising before it in recent years. We wish you the very best in coping with the challenging tasks that lie ahead of you.

Mr. President,

India had participated in the last open debate of the Security Council on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait held on October 17, 2002. Matters have evolved considerably since that time. The landmark resolution UNSCR 1441 was adopted unanimously by the Council on 8 November, 2002. The resolution facilitated the resumption of UN inspections in Iraq after a gap of 4 years. It is now almost 3

months since the re-commencement of inspections.

The heads of UNMOVIC and IAEA have briefed the Council with regular periodicity on the progress of inspections since their recommencement. We have all had the benefit of listening to the carefully worded, concise and thorough briefings by them on 27 January and 14 February. Their reports constitute the essential basis on which the Council would require to take decisions on a matter of international peace and security. We wish to convey our appreciation for the work by these two agencies and their heads.

Resolution 1441 is the latest in a series of Security Council resolutions on the disarmament of Iraq and related subjects. Resolution 1441 provides a stringent regime of inspections designed to accomplish that very task. We call upon Iraq to cooperate actively with the inspections process and comply fully with all relevant Security Council resolutions.

As many of us understood it, the gist of UNMOVIC Executive Chairman Mr. Hans Blix's message at

the briefing of 14 February was that Iraq had been cooperating on process but had not done as much on substance as it was required to do under resolution 1441. While there is a widespread feeling that inspections have to be given a chance, there is also a feeling that the Council cannot be expected to wait indefinitely to secure "immediate, active and unconditional cooperation". The recent deliberations in the Security Council over how to deal with the Iraq issue reflect serious differences in approach within the Council itself on the subject. The Council now needs to move forward with unity of purpose.

Mr. President,

India has consistently stood for a peaceful resolution of the Iraq issue. We believe that the objective of the international community is to facilitate the disarmament of Iraq, and that it is necessary to pursue all available options provided for under UNSCR 1441. Force should be resorted to only as a last, unavoidable, option.

India has also maintained the primacy of the multilateral route in addressing the issue of Iraq. The Prime Minister of India, in his address to the 57th United Nations General Assembly last year, stated the following and I quote: "A common destiny is at stake. The

world needs collective multilateralism. It needs the United Nations – the coming together and working together of all its nations in the development of a common and collective perspective". This is why we applauded the announcement by President Bush at that very forum to "work with the UN Security Council to meet our common challenge". We continue to believe that the resolution of this issue is best achieved through the collective forum of States represented by the United Nations.

India is concerned about the difficult humanitarian situation in Iraq. The Iraqi people have suffered severe shortages and privations for over a decade. Sixty percent of the Iraqi population currently rely on the UN's "Oil-for-Food Programme". The programme, which has been run in an exemplary manner by the UN, could be jeopardized by military action in Iraq leading to a humanitarian situation that could render, by some accounts, as many as 10 million people dependent on the outside world for food assistance. It is important that the Council consider the alleviation of the situation that the Iraqi people find themselves in, while considering the larger picture.

India is vitally interested in the peace and prosperity of the Gulf region with which we have had profound political, cultural, economic and religious ties spread over centuries. Our special concerns about the current crisis arise from

the presence of millions of our expatriates that live and work in the Gulf region, from threats to the security of oil supplies and volatility of oil prices that could follow military action and from the buildup of public sentiments in the region.

In a related context, we note that at the end of the last year Iraq returned the first batch of documents belonging to the Kuwaiti archives and at the beginning of this year Iraq also handed over some separate items of Kuwaiti properties. Most important is the humanitarian issue involving the search for missing Kuwaitis and other, third country, nationals. We are happy to note that it has been agreed to start discussions on this issue under the auspices of the ICRC and within the context of the Tripartite Commission. We understand that the second meeting of the newly established technical sub-committee has just taken place in Amman and congratulate Ambassador Vorontsov for his efforts in this direction and would like to see him continue the good work. At the same time, we would also like to see implementation of provisions relating to the repatriation of all Kuwaiti and third country nationals and the return of all Kuwaiti property as stipulated under resolutions 686, 687 and Section B of the resolution 1284. We hope that Iraq will act in good faith

Mr. President,

We sense, and the world senses, that the Security Council is coming close to making a decision between war and peace. However, before it makes a final determination on the question, we would urge the Council to seriously consider the numerous complex ramifications that surround any step taken by it. These include issues such as the dangers posed by the development of weapons of mass destruction and risks of their diversion to non-state actors; the credibility of enforcement action under Chapter VII of the Charter and the question of compliance; the rationale and effectiveness of weapons inspections; and the continuing pressure of sanctions. Apart from the immediate consequences of military action in a region that is already volatile, the Council will need to take into account the impact of the possible break up of the concerned State on neighbouring states, and its larger implications for peace, stability and security in the region, as well as the dangers of radicalization of public opinion around the world. Yet another set of issues of a different order of magnitude concern the potential massive internal displacement of people and possible refugee flows, the disruption of oil supplies and other such immediate economic and social repercussions of a possible outbreak of conflict.

We do not, as yet, have clear answers to the above questions. These are questions that do not have simple answers but they are questions that cannot be evaded. As

the multilateral organ of the United Nations charged with the safeguarding of international peace and security, the Security Council must give careful thought to these

questions and issues before it makes an irrevocable move.

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