



**STATEMENT BY MR. V.K. NAMBIAR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
ON THE SITUATION BETWEEN IRAQ AND KUWAIT AT THE
SECURITY COUNCIL ON MARCH 26, 2003**

Mr. President,

This meeting will represent the first open debate in the Security Council on Iraq since the outbreak of hostilities on 20 March 2003. We thank you for having provided the general membership of the United Nations an opportunity to communicate their views on this most critical issue involving international peace and security.

The situation relating to Iraq has evolved rapidly over the past few weeks. India's position advocating a peaceful resolution of this issue has been consistent and well known. The peace and prosperity of this region is as vital for India as for any other country given our long-standing political, cultural and economic ties with the countries of the region.

Mr. President,

India recognized the validity of the unanimous decision of the UN Security Council in its resolution 1441, which provided for the disarmament of Iraq. The resolution also reaffirmed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, Kuwait and the neighboring States. Resolution 1441 provided a stringent regime of inspections designed to meet the international community's desire to disarm Iraq of its Weapons of Mass Destruction.

We believe that securing Iraq's cooperation with the inspections process and compliance with all relevant Security Council resolutions should have been the main focus of the Council's efforts. That, unfortunately, did not happen. As it is, we are now presented with a situation where some members have decided to proceed unilaterally.

Mr. President,

My country received reports of the commencement of military action in Iraq with the deepest of anguish. In the circumstances, we sincerely hope that the military campaign, which was unjustified and avoidable, would be short lived. We strongly urge that all possible efforts be made to bring hostilities to an early end. We also call upon all

parties involved in the war to meet their obligations towards civilians under international humanitarian law. We are concerned about the human lives involved – Iraqi and others. We are also concerned about refugee flows. The international community should ensure that the sovereignty and integrity of Iraq are fully preserved as also its secular traditions. Sectarian and ethnic conflict should not be allowed to divide the country. The right of the people of Iraq to determine their political future and exercise control over their natural resources should also be fully respected.

The Secretary General has already drawn attention to the increasingly difficult plight of the 1.7 million residents of the city of Basra. We wish to support any efforts designed to provide relief to the civilian population of this city and other parts of the country in need of urgent assistance. We also support the decision of the Secretary General to hold a meeting of UN relief agencies today to coordinate humanitarian relief efforts in Iraq.

We have tried to follow deliberations in the Council over the Secretary General's proposal to provide humanitarian assistance to Iraq by adjusting the mechanism of the Oil-for-Food Programme. We believe that approved contracts for supplies to Iraq under the Oil-for-Food Programme would be the logical priority for delivering immediate assistance to the Iraqi people. The international community must quickly get involved in restoring peace in Iraq in the eventual reconstruction of the country and in alleviating the plight of its long suffering people. We urge the Council to display the required unity and collective will to be able to assist the Iraqi people in this endeavour.

India has already announced its willingness to fully participate in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Iraq and its people, which would be inevitably required as a result of the current conflict. Our long-standing friendship with the people of Iraq would demand nothing less of us; we would be happy to discharge our duty to share this burden.

Mr. President,

One can have differences over the necessity of war, but one cannot have differences about the urgent need for restoring peace. War is some times waged unilaterally, but peace has to be built together. We call upon all members of the Security Council and indeed all members of the United Nations to remain resolute in their efforts to secure a lasting peace and a stable future for the people of Iraq.

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