



STATEMENT BY MR. AJAI MALHOTRA, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON  
AGENDA ITEM 14: THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE AT THE 61<sup>ST</sup> SESSION OF THE UN  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 30, 2006

Madame President,

Thank you for scheduling sufficient time for a discussion on an issue that warrants the attention of the international community to an extent that few others do: the Question of Palestine, set as it is, in the larger context of the Situation in the Middle East.

We have listened with attention to the many preceding speakers. The grim perspective that has informed most statements is particularly striking. The same pessimistic outlook is visible in the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and the Secretary General's report of September this year on the Question of Palestine. Sadly, despite repeated and detailed consideration of this matter at this august forum and elsewhere within these premises, we remain no closer to a solution than we were at this time last year.

Madame President,

The events of the last few months have been deeply distressing for all concerned, set as they are in the tragic context of a growing humanitarian crisis, a collapsing Palestinian economy, the absence of dialogue, and an intensification of the vicious circle of attacks, reprisals and counter-attacks. All of this exerts an immediate and a long term impact on the lives and psyche of the people, as well as the infrastructure of daily life in the entire region. No justification makes any of these developments more palatable, irrespective of whether the victims are Israeli or Palestinian. The current context not only reduces the possibility of productive dialogue, it also lessens the prospect of any genuine efforts to move towards a solution in the near future.

Madam President,

Violence and the use of force will not only not produce a durable solution, it could well postpone moves towards *any* solution, quite apart from creating conditions for a further exacerbation of the situation. While this has been stated several times before, and in many eloquent ways, yet this central truth bears repetition: a just, fair, durable and credible solution to this vexed problem can only come from

meaningful, sincere and result-oriented dialogue; not a session of recriminations based on apportioning blame, but a dialogue that is genuinely forward-looking.

It is in this context that India has consistently urged the resumption of a direct, face to face dialogue of principals, based on the Quartet Principles. We also remain convinced that the Roadmap, as endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 1515, remains a valid framework of reference for an eventual settlement, even though its originally-envisioned target date for a settlement has already passed last year.

Towards this end, we are with the overwhelming majority of countries who consistently affirm their commitment to a negotiated two-State solution, accepted by the two principals, that would result in a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent State of Palestine, existing side-by-side with Israel in peace and security. We support the call of the UN Secretary-General to consider innovative ways by all sides in order to fully implement the Roadmap and thus lead, without delay, to a just, fair, equitable and mutually-acceptable solution to this conflict, based on relevant UN resolutions, including Security Council resolutions.

Madame President,

We cannot but be deeply concerned by the heavy humanitarian cost that is sometimes overshadowed by the larger, more gruesome headlines that violence begets. The spiral of chaos has long-term implications for the stability of the entire region. We reiterate our call for the adoption of urgent measures to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian people. The impact of the collapsing economy, outlined in the Secretary General's report, carries the portents of a dramatic humanitarian disaster in the making. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that it is averted at all costs.

Madame President,

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our sincere hope that the Quartet and all regional states will resume efforts to de-escalate the situation, and take proactive steps to avert the humanitarian crisis that otherwise appears inevitable. We also believe that our overall objective must be to move the dialogue forward, if nothing else, by creating a favourable environment for its resumption by the principals. As the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process said last week, "only the Palestinians can convince Israel that they can be peaceful neighbours, and only Israel can persuade Palestinians that a two-State solution is available and can be worked towards". We must work to make this happen in the shortest possible time.

**Thank you, Madam President**

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