



result-oriented discussions would commence at the earliest, aimed at finding the just, mutually acceptable and durable solution whose contours are well-known and hardly needs any reiteration. We had also hoped that the process of dialogue would help quickly address the daily litany of violence, blockades, rhetoric and privation.

And yet our hopes remain unfulfilled. Settlements continue to expand in the occupied territories in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Road Map. The separation wall continues to be built, in derogation of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, and resolutions of the General Assembly. The division of Palestinian territories endures since the events of June 2007, despite efforts to unify the leadership. Most damagingly, the blockade of Gaza persists. Restrictions on movement and the enduring blockade of Gaza have serious humanitarian consequences in an already-precarious situation. Restrictions on supplies of fuel and electricity in Gaza have only intensified the humanitarian challenge. The announcement late last week of the suspension of humanitarian aid into Gaza, as a result of the resumption of the blockade, is deeply troubling and is cause of grave concern. While we do hear reports of some resumption of access for humanitarian relief, we call for the lifting of this blockade to afford full access to Gaza for the supply of humanitarian aid and essential commodities.

The security situation also remains a challenge. Despite efforts to maintain a ceasefire, incidents of indiscriminate violence and retaliation continue to erupt, thus perpetuating the cycle of violence. The rise of incidents of violence by illegal settlers is particularly disturbing as it runs the risk of inflaming further violence in these highly sensitive locations. In this context, India notes with satisfaction the positive progress recorded by the Palestinian Authority in securing several towns in the Palestinian territory.

It is important that we retain clarity regarding the fundamentals. India believes that all violence must be eschewed if there is to be a positive atmosphere for any serious dialogue. However, this is not in itself adequate. There also needs to be a serious effort to dismantle the barriers to free movement within the West Bank, and the blockades around Gaza. Apart from facilitating the entry of humanitarian relief, it is also essential that normal supplies of basic facilities such as power and water, and essential commodities, are resumed. Citizens of Gaza also have the right to expect normalized access to medical facilities, like any other people. The construction of new settlements in the occupied territories, and of the separation wall, must stop forthwith.

Mr. President,

A sovereign, viable and independent State of Palestine, to which the international community is committed through all relevant resolutions, cannot be created under the current circumstances. Our collective commitment to UNSCRs 242, 338, 1397 and 1515 is devoid of meaning if we do not ensure that all parties to the conflict abide by their commitments under the Roadmap. As the Quartet leads the international community's efforts to assist the negotiations between Palestinian and Israeli leaders, we urge the Quartet to do much more so that the process is

progressed in a manner that helps us achieve the desired outcome at the earliest. India remains in support of a political solution, based on the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative, which remain the only widely endorsed frameworks for an agreement.

Mr President,

While India is not directly involved in supporting these negotiations, we have maintained our effort to help avert a larger humanitarian crisis. Last month, during President Abbas's visit to India, our Prime Minister not only reaffirmed India's earlier commitment of \$ 20 million (15 million in project assistance and \$ 5 million assistance), he also announced a grant of \$10 million as budgetary support for the Palestine National Authority. An additional sum of \$10 million was announced for project assistance for Palestinian development programmes. India's assistance programmes in capacity-building, and in support to educational programmes were also expanded.

Mr. President,

This leads us to the larger point: the only lasting solution to the Question of Palestine is a just, lasting, mutually acceptable and comprehensive solution, drawn up along well-known contours that are set out and recognized in the relevant Security Council resolutions. The ongoing cycle of violence and counter-violence only makes the prospects of an eventual peace more remote. It remains critical for the parties to the conflict and the international community—in particular the Quartet—to redouble efforts to settle the Question of Palestine in the year ahead. India reiterates that an early, amicable and mutually-acceptable solution, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, brooks no delay.

I thank you, Mr President.

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