



**STATEMENT BY MR. A. GOPINATHAN, DEPUTY PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST,
INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL
ON APRIL 9, 2002**

Mr. President,

We thank your delegation for calling this meeting to discuss the ever-worsening situation in the Occupied Territories that is mounting as a cause of acute concern and deep distress to all of us.

Since 29th March we have made two statements on this agenda item setting out our position. I shall, therefore, be brief.

The statement by Peter Hansen, Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which brings out the grievous situation of civilians in the Balata and Jenin refugee camps, is indeed extremely distressing and speaks for itself. Israel's military action against innocent civilians will in no way serve its best cause or provide the security it seeks for its people; in fact, the consequences will be to the contrary. There can be no justification for directing violence at innocent civilians.

Resolutions 1397, 1402 and 1403, adopted by the Security Council in the recent past, provide a road map for the restoration of normalcy. We once again call upon both parties to implement these resolutions. Israel must withdraw its forces from the Occupied Territories immediately and there should be a ceasefire, followed by the resumption of negotiations. This is the clearly expressed and uniform sentiment of the international community.

We understand that the Security Council met with the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine yesterday. We hope that this interaction would contribute to the immediate implementation of the Council's resolutions and pave the way for the resumption of dialogue and negotiations so that the people of Israel and the people of Palestine can live side by side within secure and recognized borders, and for lasting peace in the region.

Mr. President,

In our earlier statements we have emphasised that President Arafat, who enjoys wide support and respect, is the symbol of Palestinian nationhood. His well-being and safety is also of

paramount concern to the international community. We reiterate that all restrictions placed on him should be lifted forthwith to enable him to play his rightful role.

Mr. President,

Another cause of serious concern is the continued violation of the Blue Line. These risk further exacerbating the situation in the region. These also pose a threat to the UN Peacekeepers. We urge that the violations be brought to an end immediately and the sanctity of the Blue Line be respected.

Mr. President,

The situation in the Middle East is frighteningly grave. On 7 April, the Council had called on the parties to cooperate fully and in good faith with Ministers and Special Envoys of the Quartet and with the Secretary General, especially in the context of the forthcoming visit of the United States Secretary of State to the region. We urge the Security Council to work assiduously with the parties concerned to bring to an immediate end the violence that has engulfed the region and which could have very far-reaching consequences. We convey to you our full support in your endeavours.

BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS