

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR HARDEEP SINGH PURI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE,
AT THE PLENARY MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO CONSIDER THE
HUMANITARIAN SITUATION RESULTING FROM THE FLOODS IN PAKISTAN ON
AUGUST 20, 2010

Mr. President,

Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for your personal initiative in organizing this meeting and proposing the resolution for focused action by the international community on the humanitarian situation arising from the floods in Pakistan.

Yesterday, while we commemorated the World Humanitarian Day, Pakistan and the international community are confronted with another calamity, one of the biggest natural calamities of our recent times.

I would also like to express deep appreciation for the Secretary-General's initiative in visiting the flood ravaged areas of Pakistan and his strenuous efforts to mobilize international assistance for Pakistan at this time of need.

The high-level participation that we have witnessed in this meeting is a testimony of the solidarity and commitment of the international community to being where one of our Member-States requires help.

Mr. President,

India and Pakistan share the same history, same topography, landmass and the river systems that irrigate both sides of the border. Our region is prone to natural disasters and the vagaries of nature continue to take a heavy toll of human lives and material losses in our region. We are familiar with the devastation and human suffering they

cause and the trauma they leave behind long after the initial impact. However, in this particular case, the wide-spread devastation is unprecedented and has never ever been witnessed before in recent history. Even some parts of India bordering Pakistan have also been affected by these floods.

Kindly allow me to convey to the people and the Government of Pakistan the heartfelt condolences of the people and the Government of India on the lives that have been tragically lost in this disaster

Kindly allow me, Mr. President, also to convey the deepest sympathy of the people and the Government of India for those who have been injured and traumatized by this calamity and for the material losses that the people and the country have suffered. Our hearts and our prayers are with the near and dear of those who have died and to those who have suffered and continue to suffer. We share the pain and agony and fully understand the trauma and suffering that our Pakistani brethren are living through.

Mr. President,

Even as we meet today, the humanitarian catastrophe is still unfolding. The extent of devastation is unparalleled. Over 10% of the entire country's population has been affected and there has been extensive damage to livestock, crops and the infrastructure.

The magnitude of the tragedy makes it incumbent on the international community to pool its energies and resources and to assist Pakistan in its efforts to rebuild and rehabilitate the devastated region. As a member of the international community and, more significantly as a close neighbor, India recognizes its responsibility in contributing to this global effort to extend its support to Pakistan in its hour of need. We cannot remain unaffected by this humanitarian catastrophe.

We are willing to do all that is in our power to assist Pakistan in facing the consequences of floods. We extend our wholehearted support to the Government of Pakistan in its efforts for relief and rehabilitation of the adversely affected population.

Our Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh called his counterpart from Pakistan yesterday and our External Affairs Minister Mr. S.M. Krishna had also spoken earlier to the Foreign Minister of Pakistan and expressed our sorrow and condolences to Pakistan. As a gesture of our solidarity and sympathy, we have offered assistance of US \$ 5 million, in the first instance, for provision of relief supplies from India to be prioritized by the Government of Pakistan in their battle to respond to the crisis. We have offered that the relief supplies could be handed over to the Pakistani authorities at the border for further distribution by the Pakistani authorities. Given our geographical proximity, provision of

relief supplies from India would save precious time and provide much needed relief to the flood victims at the earliest. It is our expectation, Mr. President, that the relief supplies would start moving very shortly.

Our Prime Minister has also said that the Government of India is ready to do more to assist in the relief effort. He has also underscored that all of South Asia should rise to the occasion and extend every possible help to the people of Pakistan affected by the tragedy.

As and when Pakistan is able to articulate its requirements for medium to long-term recovery, we will, within our abilities and in accordance with the needs of Pakistan, be privileged to be of assistance.

Mr. President,

While national authorities are, and should be, at the forefront of humanitarian response, international solidarity and assistance guided by humanitarian principles, can play a key role. We believe that the United Nations should coordinate this humanitarian assistance so that it is channeled according to national priorities. This meeting would, therefore, be vital input in developing the framework of response of the international community to the situation which is unfolding.

Before I conclude, I reiterate India's willingness and readiness to contribute to this global effort. What Pakistan needs today is a sustained and long-term commitment of the international community for providing relief and rehabilitation to the affected population. I am confident that the international community would not be found wanting in supporting the Government of Pakistan in its relief and rehabilitation efforts. I have no doubt that the people of Pakistan have the strength and resilience to overcome this natural disaster.

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