

STATEMENT BY MRS. PRENEET KAUR, MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, DEBATE ON 'THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTIONS' IN THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ON OCTOBER 22, 2013

Mr. President,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

At the outset let me express our appreciation to you for convening this quarterly open debate, which allows the Council to take stock of recent developments in the Middle East, including the State of Palestine. I would also like to thank Under Secretary General for Political Affairs Mr. Jeffery Feltman, for his comprehensive briefing.



Mr. President,

2. Resolution of the Palestinian question remains an urgent and key issue for the international community. It is a prerequisite for building a sustainable and lasting peace in the Middle East region. Given the evolving situation in the Middle East region and its inherent fragility and unpredictability, it is necessary that there is no more delay in the resolution of the Palestinian question.

3. We are encouraged by the ongoing direct talks between Israel and Palestine facilitated by the US. We hope that the direct talks which have resumed after one of the longest period of stalemate since the signing of the Oslo Accords will lead to concrete results within the time frame of nine months envisaged by the US Secretary of State, Mr John Kerry.

4. In this context, it is necessary to address the issue of Israeli settlement activities, which are continuing unabated. These activities are not only illegal, but also pose a

serious threat to the two-state solution. We join others in urging Israel to stop settlement activities.

5. The blockade of Gaza has had serious consequences for the lives of Palestinians. It has adversely affected essential services, economic activities and infrastructure development. We continue to hold that it is necessary for Israel to lift the blockade on Gaza and allow normal and unrestricted movement of persons and goods within Palestine.

Mr. President,

6. India remains steadfast in its support for a negotiated solution to the Israeli Palestinian issue resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders with East Jerusalem as its Capital, side by side and at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap, various UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

7. Given the financial difficulties that the Palestinian Authority continues to face, India remains committed to support the Palestinian Authority bilaterally as well as through IBSA Fund. Bilaterally, we continue to partner with the Palestinian Authority by providing developmental support and assistance through direct budgetary support, contributions to UNRWA, training, etc. Through IBSA Fund, we will continue to undertake capacity building and infrastructure projects that are prioritized by the Palestinian Authority.

8. As demonstrated over the past six decades, including during its memberships in the UN Security Council, India also stands ready to support all measures that the Palestinian leadership may take towards political resolution of the Final Status issues.

Mr. President,

9. Before I conclude, I would like to express our deep concern at the situation in Syria. While we welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 2118 on the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme as well as the Presidential Statement on the humanitarian situation in Syria, we are concerned at the continuing violence and worsening humanitarian situation.

10. We have long held that there is no military solution to this conflict. We continue to think that an inclusive political dialogue to resolve the crisis should remain the focus of the United Nations, including this Council. We look forward to an early holding of the Geneva-2 Conference, which should help commence a Syrian-led inclusive political dialogue that resolves the current crisis and meets the legitimate aspirations of all sections of Syrian society.

I thank you.

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