

STATEMENT BY MR. AJAI MALHOTRA, AMBASSADOR/DEPUTY PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE, AT THE RESUMED 10TH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON JANUARY 15, 2009

Mr. President,

We are meeting today on the margins of a serious crisis in West Asia. It is a crisis that impacts upon the stability of the region and beyond, to the world at large. We deeply regret the loss of all civilian lives – every innocent life lost is one too many. It is important that there is an end to the vicious circle of violence and counter-violence.

Speaking on the situation in Gaza, the Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh, expressed concern at the rise in tensions in the region as a result of the attack on Gaza that has led to the needless loss of lives of so many innocent men, women and children. He said "India has strongly condemned these incidents and it is our hope that the international community would get together and help restore peace in the region as soon as possible. I wish to reiterate our unstinted and unwavering support for the just Palestinian cause". We support ongoing initiatives, including that of the UN Secretary-General, for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire as called for by UNSCR 1860 (2009), with which all parties should comply.

Mr. President,

In your circular letter of January 7, 2009, you have specifically asked this Assembly to "consider the ongoing humanitarian situation". The deteriorating situation in Gaza has drawn the attention of the Government of India and the plight of the population has become heart rending. The daily time table of a three-hour cease fire does not appear to be producing any favourable changes in the situation. The situation on the energy front appears extremely grim as nearly three-fourths of the Gaza population is now without any electricity and the prospects, with no fuel oil available, appear even more serious. The situation on the food front in Gaza is no better. Some 750,000 people are without access to food. We express serious concern at the plight of the million and half Gaza civilians living in a permanent state of fright. There is therefore an urgent need for assured humanitarian access for provision of essential commodities in Gaza.

Given the scale of the humanitarian disaster unfolding in Gaza, and the escalating number of civilian victims, in response to the Flash Appeal made recently by United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), India is extending assistance of US\$ 1 million for use by the Agency to provide shelters, cash assistance and essential household items to the affected families in Gaza. India has also announced a grant of \$10 million as budgetary support for Palestinian National Authority, besides an additional sum of US \$10 million in project assistance.

Mr. President,

In parallel to all this, we must urgently reinforce our collective message that all actions that run counter to the commitments of the parties under the Roadmap must cease. India remains steadfastly in support of a political solution, based on the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative. It is important to move forward towards the early creation of an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side with Israel, within secure and internationally-recognized borders.

Mr President,

India wants to see the creation of an environment for the earliest possible resumption of dialogue under the peace process and it seeks an immediate end to the suffering of the people of Gaza.

Thank you, Mr President.

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