

**Statement by the Foreign Minister of Pakistan in the meeting of the OIC Committee on Palestine on 23 September 2004**

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Excellencies,**

It is, indeed, an honour for me to address the meeting of the OIC Committee on Palestine. The Committee provides an important forum to take stock of the situation in the holy land and consider the road ahead.

2. In the last one year, the situation in the occupied Palestine has further deteriorated. Over 3500 Palestinians have been martyred since the inception of Intifada in 2000. Still Israel refuses to abandon its official policy of human rights violations and economic exclusion of the Palestinian population. The construction of the Separation Wall is continuing in defiance of an outraged international public opinion as well as the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). It is a gross violation of international human rights and humanitarian law.

3. In order to avoid international criticism on its repressive policies, the Sharon government proposed a unilateral "Disengagement Plan" from Gaza. So far, Israel has failed to make good on its promise to withdraw from Gaza. However, it continues to implement its plans to expand the current illegal settlements in the West Bank.

4. The international community particularly the OIC members had supported the Quartet Roadmap last year because it envisaged the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in 2005. Israel reluctantly accepted the Roadmap and subsequently avoided its obligations under it to delay the achievement of the Roadmap's various key goalposts. In order to create difficulties for the Palestinian Authority, it systematically destroyed their security structure and at the same time held them responsible for their inability to control violence.

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Excellencies,**

5. Our Palestinian brothers and sisters are passing through the most daunting phase of their struggle. At this critical juncture of their history, they need our full support and assistance. The Organization of the Islamic Conference has a special responsibility towards them. The Palestinian cause, the liberation of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, restoration of its status as the Capital of the Independent State of Palestine and the end of Israeli occupation from all occupied territories, are the primary objectives of the OIC since its inception.

6. The Committee on Palestine should play a proactive role in highlighting the problems being faced by the Palestinians and urging the relevant international bodies to fulfill their responsibilities in accordance with the United Nations Charter and other relevant international legal instruments including the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. The Committee should frequently meet with the Quartet members to convey our concerns regarding the on-ground situation. The Quartet should be urged to seek relief for the Palestinian people by ensuring following five measures:

- Immediate and unconditional withdrawal from Gaza Strip;

- Dismantling of Separation Wall;
- Immediate dismantling of illegal settlements;
- Immediate end of the policy of economic closures;
- Immediate end of the policy of Israeli attacks on Palestinian civilians.

7. Pakistan accords utmost importance to the right of self-determination of the Muslim people all over the world. As part of its contribution to the Palestinian struggle, Pakistan played a leading role in upholding the Palestinian rights at all international forums including the Security Council. Our association with the Palestinian struggle is a matter of pride for the Government and people of Pakistan. I take this opportunity to reaffirm that Pakistan will remain steadfast in its traditional, material, diplomatic and political support to the Palestinian struggle.

**I thank you, Mr. Chairman.**