

**Statement by Ambassador Shamshad Ahmad, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations on "The Situation in the Middle East including the Palestinian question" at the Security Council 26 February 2002**

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**Mr. President,**

Once again we return to this chamber, as we have done so many times before, to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Like others, we are also happy to see you preside over this important session.

2. The deteriorating situation in Palestine now threatens to nullify all efforts, made in the previous two decades, to bring peace and stability in the Middle East. With the peace process derailed and violence spiraling out of control never in the history of the Palestine crisis has the situation been so fragile and a need to respond more critical.

**Mr. President,**

3. We have debated in this chamber, the issue of Palestine, for well over half a century. It is one of the two unresolved disputes – the other being the Kashmir issue -- involving the destiny of peoples and their inalienable right of self-determination with serious implications for world peace and security which have been on the agenda of the Security Council all these years. In both cases, there are Security Council resolutions which provide a framework for their resolution and unfortunately, in both cases the resolutions remain on the shelves of this Council unimplemented.

4. The Security Council's resolutions on Palestine call for peace in the Middle East based on Israel's withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. Yet, as these resolutions remain unimplemented, this peace also remains as elusive as ever. Violence continues to spiral out of control. The Palestinian people, like others in similar circumstances, continue to be deprived of their legitimate right of self-determination. While we have waited for this body to act and to implement its own resolutions, the situation has continued to deteriorate with flickers of hope turning into ashes of despair. The Secretary-General could not have put it more appropriately when he said that "we are nearing the edge of an abyss."

5. We agree with Secretary-General that the situation is "bleak," but not "irreversible," and that "there is room for hope". We also agree with him that "the situation now unfolding requires urgent steps." The Secretary-General has also given a realistic expression to the collective hopes of the UN membership for an end to this dismal situation by welcoming what he described the "new thinking and imaginative ideas" which have been emerging recently in the face of the aggravating situation. This new thinking, if pursued in good earnest, should augur well for the prospect of peace in the Middle East. Every challenge bring with it an opportunity and, indeed, exceptional challenges warrant exceptional responses. Time has come to close this unpleasant chapter of conflict and misery and open a new leaf for peace and co-existence on the basis of justice and equity. In building upon any new approach, we do not have to look very far beyond Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, which provide the fundamental basis for peace in that region.

**Mr. President,**

6. Violence only begets violence. It solves no problem. The present deteriorating situation warrants our urgent attention. The international community must act, and act with determination to prevent the situation from worsening. The prospects of peace in the Middle East will remain bleak without the immediate cessation of all acts of violence, provocation and destruction. The peace process needs to be put back on track and that is not possible without a return to the situation that existed before September 2000. Violence of all sorts and scales is deplorable and must come to an end. The recommendations of the Mitchell Report need to be implemented. A better environment needs to be created to ensure the safety of all civilians. The international

community, particularly the guarantors of the peace process, must use their influence and good offices to ensure full compliance with the peace agreements and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

7. We all know that no lasting peace in the Middle East would be possible without achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. And we also know that the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, especially the right of self-determination and the withdrawal of occupation forces from the Occupied Territories as well as the dismantling of illegal settlements are the essential ingredients of a peace settlement. We urge the concerned parties, especially the guarantors of the peace process, to bring this about. We also call on the Security Council to fulfill its Charter obligations by taking urgent steps to safeguard peace and security in the region.

**Mr. President,**

8. The international community must encourage and facilitate a meaningful dialogue with a view to breaking this gridlock which has held the entire Middle East region hostage for so long. The United Nations has always upheld the legitimate struggles of peoples for self-determination and must do so now. It has a responsibility to take the lead role in brokering peace based on the Security Council resolutions. This is the least this Organization can do to justify the Nobel Peace Prize that it shared recently with the Secretary-General in recognition of its Charter mandate to ensure world peace and security.

9. The present challenge provides us with an opportunity to move away from the brink. The time has come for a purposeful dialogue to end the legacy of violence and conflict. It must not be allowed to get lost in the maze of obstructionism and filibustering. The time has come for the international community to enable this Council to uphold its moral and legal obligations under the Charter. Those who have the responsibility to maintain international peace must act now to revive the process of negotiations and the hopes of durable peace in the Middle East.

**I thank you, Mr. President.**

New York  
26 February, 2002