

**STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR MUNIR AKRAM, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
PAKISTAN, AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL MINISTERIAL MEETING ON THE SITUATION
BETWEEN IRAQ AND KUWAIT ON MARCH 19, 2003**

We are meeting at a momentous and tragic moment in modern history. We meet today when the hopes for a peaceful solution of the Iraq issue are about to end. This is a sad occasion for the Council and the United Nations whose vocation is peace.

War, as the Secretary General has just recently stated, is always a "catastrophe." "It leads to major human tragedy."

We thank Dr. Blix for his presentation of the Programme of Work of UNMOVIC. We also thank the representative of IAEA for giving us the Programme of Work of IAEA.

Everyone is agreed that Iraq should implement its obligations under the resolutions of the Security Council.

Unfortunately, in its detailed discussions spanning over several weeks, the Council could not find convergence on any of the proposals on the table or otherwise under consideration within and amongst Security Council members.

Pakistan has consistently advocated a peaceful solution. We stressed that every possible avenue must be exhausted to seek a peaceful solution and that the use of force should only be the last, the very last resort.

Mr. President,

It is in this backdrop that Pakistan has awaited the conclusion of work by UNMOVIC on its Program of Work and Key Remaining Disarmament Tasks (KRDTs).

I also wish to take this opportunity to record our deep appreciation for Dr. Blix and Dr. ElBaradei - - as well as their respective teams -- for having done their job in the most thorough, professional and objective manner.

We have carefully studied the Program of Work and the 12 key remaining disarmament tasks identified by Dr. Blix and his team.

We believe this could have provided a useful basis for completion of the disarmament process in Iraq in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions – if Iraq's full and unconditional cooperation could have been assured.

It is regrettable that, in the situation as it has evolved, UNMOVIC and IAEA will, obviously, be unable to pursue their responsibilities for the present.

We agree that resolutions 1284 and 1441 remain in force and relevant for the future.

We take cognizance of the decision made by the Secretary General, justified by the need to ensure the continued safety and security of UN personnel to temporarily withdraw all UN personnel, including the UNMOVIC and IAEA staff.

Pakistan supports the Secretary General's decision. He had no other choice, under the circumstances, but to give priority to ensuring the safety and security of UN personnel.

The Secretary General has notified to the Council members that the activities of UNMOVIC/IAEA, as well as other UN mandates, have been "suspended de facto."

We understand this necessity and await the time when conditions would allow the inspectors to resume and complete their tasks.

Indeed, the long-term task of monitoring would require their return to Iraq.

We, therefore, presume that the present structures would be kept intact.

Mr. President,

These past few weeks have seen the whole world's attention riveted on our Council.

Despite the best efforts of all members, we found that the Council was not in a position to traverse a path that took everybody along.

The members were separated by difference, we believe honest differences.

In Pakistan's view, despite this inability to bridge differences, the Security Council remains relevant.

The Security Council is the embodiment of humanity's best hopes for peace.

The Security Council must uphold international legality equitably. It must seek to implement all Security Council resolutions -- including those on Palestine, and particularly those on Jammu and Kashmir, whose people have been struggling and dying for over fifty years.

Mr. President,

The changed circumstances have also re-ordered our priorities.

Today, I believe everyone agrees, the most urgent task before us is to decide how to address the humanitarian challenge that would mount in the days ahead.

The withdrawal of UN humanitarian staff from Iraq and the suspension of the Oil-for-Food program and outbreak of hostilities could lead to a humanitarian fall-out whose dimensions are unclear at this time.

The Secretary General also intends to make proposals to the Council that we all have agreed to consider as soon as these are ready.

Pakistan will do everything possible to ameliorate the suffering of our unfortunate brothers and sisters in Iraq.

Pakistan will work closely with the Secretary General and Council members to ensure that Iraqi people do not suffer any further.

The people of Iraq have already suffered enormously. Any delay or procrastination that exacerbates their suffering would be doubly regrettable.

Mr. President,

Pakistan believes that the time and space for diplomacy never ends.

Even once the guns speak, the duty of the Security Council to restore peace and security; to contain conflict; to prevent the human suffering of the Iraqi people and others in the region; to ensure the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and its neighbours; to ensure the stability of this sensitive region of the world, will not end. They will become more acute.

The Security Council's exertions of the past few weeks have revealed the divisions within the world nations.

But the healing of the wounds that have opened and may become exacerbated in the next days and weeks, could also be accomplished here in the Security Council of the United Nations.

I thank you, Mr. President