

Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, on the “Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question,” in the Security Council July 21, 2005

Mr. President,

We thank you for convening this open meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. In the face of far-reaching developments taking place in the region, it is important for the international community to be actively engaged. This Council, in particular, has a special responsibility for peace in the Middle East.

2. A lot has been said during this day-long debate. I would like to make five essential points:

First, the construction of the separation wall by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian territories, besides enormously aggravating the human suffering in the Palestinian territories, poses a mortal danger to the peace process, seriously undermines the implementation of the Road Map, and presents a major obstacle to the creation of a viable contiguous Palestinian state. Last July, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) rendered its Advisory Opinion concluding that the wall is unlawful.

The General Assembly, in resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004, demanded that Israel comply with its legal obligations as mentioned in the Advisory Opinion, which *inter alia* included immediate cessation of the construction, dismantling of the parts already constructed, and payment of reparations to the affected persons.

It is a matter of deep concern that – one year after the ICJ advisory opinion and the General Assembly resolution – the construction of this illegal wall continues unabated and has indeed accelerated. The Israeli cabinet has recently approved the remaining details of the separation wall around Jerusalem, which -- as Special Coordinator Mr. Alvaro de Soto reported this morning -- would cut off some 55,000 Palestinians residents of East Jerusalem from the rest of the city. They will be separated from their work place, schools, hospitals, and families. Besides accentuating the plight of the Palestinians, this action raises much larger issues, including the final status issues. The international community has an obligation to ensure that Israel does not further ignore the ICJ opinion and the General Assembly resolution, fulfills its legal obligations, fully respects the international humanitarian law and that it does not pre-empt the final status issues, specially as regards Jerusalem.

Second, the situation on the ground continues to be of serious concern -- with increase in violence and the reported “gradual erosion” of the cease-fire. While referring to mortar and Qassem rocket attacks by the militants, the Special Coordinator also noted in today’s briefing the resumption by the

Israeli side of the practice of targeted killings. The principal victims of this tragic conflict remain innocent civilians, the bulk of them Palestinians. We appreciate President Abbas's commitment to security reforms and the practical steps taken by the Palestinian Authority to strengthen law and order. These endeavors deserve the full support of the international community.

Latest statistics also show a significant increase in the Israeli construction activity in the West Bank and Gaza. The Quartet, in its statement of 23 June, expressed concern over the Israeli settlement activity and rightly affirmed the need to avoid any action that contravenes the Road Map or prejudices final status negotiations. As demanded by the international community consistently, all illegal settlement activity must be frozen and reversed.

It is vital that all sides must avoid any escalation, observe the utmost restraint, and work to establish a stable environment for hope and security. But hope, Mr. President, cannot be generated in a vacuum. Peace and development go hand in hand. The Palestinian Authority must have the necessary international assistance to revive the economy and undertake the developmental activities essential for turning a new page in Palestinian life. We welcome recent commitments for support to the Palestinians, including at the G-8 Summit.

Third, the Israeli disengagement plan from Gaza and parts of northern West Bank is a welcome step. It should be implemented with the utmost care and in full coordination with the Palestinian Authority. The withdrawal must be full and complete. And, most importantly, it must be the first step towards the end of the occupation of all Palestinian territories.

Fourth, Israelis and Palestinian must deepen their dialogue and gradually move to address the final status issues. The Security Council should actively promote this process.

Fifth, the implementation of the Road Map offers the most viable way forward towards sustainable peace. Ensuring a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, in accordance with resolutions 242, 338, and the Road Map, is our collective obligation. The vision of two states, Israel and Palestine -- living side by side in peace and security -- is one that was reflected in the Arab Peace Initiative and has been embraced by the entire international community. We must all work for the earliest possible realization of this vision.

3. Success in realizing this vision can have profound and positive implications for peace and stability in the entire Middle East and beyond. At this fateful moment, the international community, including the Security Council, must summon the political courage and will to ensure the realization of this shared vision.
