

**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, 17 April 2006**

Mr. President,

On behalf of the delegation of Pakistan, I wish to felicitate you, and the Chinese delegation, on the skillful manner in which you are guiding the work of the Security Council this month. I also wish to congratulate Ambassador Mayoral and his delegation on the successful Argentine Presidency in March.

Mr. President,

2. This meeting was convened to consider the latest act in the tragedy of the Palestinian people. The Pakistan delegation endorses the concern expressed in the statement of the OIC Chairman, the Permanent Representative of Yemen, regarding the bombardment conducted against the Palestinians in recent days and the measures that are being taken by Israel that increase the suffering and deprivation of the Palestinian population. Equally, I would like to express our condemnation of the act of terrorism which resulted in death and injury to several Israeli civilians.

3. Events in the last 3 months have transformed hope for peace in the Middle East into foreboding and fear.

4. Hopes for peace ran high in recent years with agreement that a final settlement for the Palestinian-Israeli dispute should be based on the principle of “land for peace”, through the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242, 338, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Summit Initiative of 2002. The process to achieve a two-State solution was spelt out in the Quartet’s Road Map. Despite questions about the illegal “separation wall”, West Bank settlement activity, the frequent illegal execution of Palestinians by Israel, as well as acts of terrorism against Israelis, hope for implementation of the Road Map remained alive. Palestinian groups had agreed to halt anti-Israeli violence. Suicide attacks declined. And, most importantly, Israel withdrew completely – even if unilaterally – from the Gaza. The Palestinians then elected Abu Mazen as President.

5. The positive trends and optimistic mood has all but evaporated following the Palestinian Parliamentary elections, which were encouraged by the international community and were free and fair. It is a supreme irony that this democratic exercise – so widely encouraged in the developing world and especially in the Middle East – has led to a situation where the prospects of a peaceful settlement have dimmed almost to darkness.

6. The challenges before the international community are three fold:

One, how to end the massive human suffering of the Palestinian people and prevent chaos in the Gaza and the West Bank when the revenues and assistance

to the Palestinian Authority has been terminated and targeted killings and artillery bombings continue?

Two, how to maintain peace between Israel and the Palestinians and resume negotiations, given the wide gulf that has now appeared between their positions?

Three, how to prevent actions being taken by Israel that could unilaterally create “realities” that would make a negotiated settlement – based on the principle of land for peace – far more difficult and perhaps impossible?

7. There are, of course, no ready answers to these questions for the moment. Yet, one fact should be evident: the United Nations, including the Security Council and the Secretary-General, must now play the central role in responding to these challenges. The United Nations, in particular the Security Council, have a direct responsibility in this conflict, flowing from Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Moreover, other interlocutors have, in one way or another, themselves excluded their ability to intercede with all the concerned parties; the UN is the only player which can serve the role of mediator, facilitator and peacemaker.

8. **First**, in order to meet the basic human needs of the Palestinian people, and in preventing breakdown of law and order in the Palestinian territories, the UN and its agencies should maintain and enlarge their assistance to the Palestinian people – not terminate or restrict it. Although others have ended assistance to the Palestinian Authority, the UN and its agencies can work out arrangements to channel such assistance as is available multilaterally and bilaterally – in ways that can strengthen political cohesion and order, rather than heighten division and disorder. In particular, the political authority of President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority should be preserved and strengthened. We hope the Secretary-General and concerned agencies will take urgent steps to identify the human and humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people and mobilize a coordinated response from the world community.

9. **Second**, arrangements need to be elaborated to preserve peace between Israeli forces and Palestinian security forces as well as other armed groups and militias. Here again, if other interlocutors are unavailable, the United Nations can and must play a central role in evolving arrangements for maintenance of a durable ceasefire and non-violence. We trust that the Secretary-General will authorize the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and his Personal Representative, Mr. Alvaro de Soto, to help the parties in evolving such arrangements for the maintenance of peace.

10. The Special Coordinator could be also helpful in exploring the basis for resumption of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and in resurrecting consensus on the elements for a final settlement. The new Palestinian government, led by Hamas, has been well advised to respond to the ground realities, especially the existence of Israel, and to eschew resort to violence. Obviously, recognition of realities is a mutual process. Neither Israel, nor the international community, can ignore the Palestinian reality either, including the democratic choice of the Palestinian people. And if the Hamas government is to

emerge as a responsible player in a negotiating process, there would be justification to reconsider its description by some States as a “terrorist organization”.

11. **Third**, Israel – and its newly elected government – must be equally persuaded to desist from plans for a unilateral “solution”. Unilateralism, as we have witnessed elsewhere, is unlikely to promote a stable or sustainable peace in the Holy Land. Therefore, in the process of mutual confidence-building, Israel should halt the further construction of the separation barrier and Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank. These actions will jeopardize the objective of creating “a viable, democratic sovereign and contiguous Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security”. It would also jeopardize the resolution of final status issues, including the status of East Jerusalem and the holy places.

12. The Palestinian tragedy – including the occupation of some of Islam’s holiest sites in East Jerusalem – is at the heart of the turmoil in the Middle East; it is also the principal root cause of the humiliation and anger in the Arab and Islamic world – anger which breeds extremism and often spawns acts of terrorism. A just solution for Palestine is not just a regional imperative; it is a primary pre-condition for global peace and security.