

**Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative
of Pakistan, in the debate of the Security Council on the 'The
situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question'**

22 August 2006

Mr. President,

The Pakistan delegation highly appreciates your skillful leadership of the Security Council during this month and for the opportunity to participate in a discussion on the Middle East situation. We have listened carefully to the briefing provided by Under-Secretary-General Gambari.

2. Whatever one's political perspective, it is clear that the Middle East is a region in flames and on the edge of chaos.

3. Last month, the world witnessed 30 days of a cruel and unjust war which witnessed a series of violations of the basic principles and purposes of the UN Charter.

First, the use of disproportionate force: No military provocation by irregular forces could justify a full-scale attack and destruction of a country whose national forces or authorities had no role in such provocation. We do not rocket attacks which resulted in the loss of innocent civilian lives in Israel. At the same time, there can be no justification for bombardments whose victims were overwhelmingly innocent Lebanese civilians, including children and women. There can be no justification for the wanton destruction of the cities and infrastructure of a vulnerable country that was in the process of reconstructing itself, from earlier conflicts and invasions, into a peaceful, prosperous and democratic polity.

Second, the war witnessed gross and consistent violations of international humanitarian law, in Qana, in Tyre, in Beirut.

Third, it witnessed what clearly appeared to be deliberate attacks against UN peacekeepers, in which four were killed. We trust this will be fully investigated.

Fourth, and, most serious, was the failure by this Council to discharge its primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security. The world watched helplessly for 30 days as the bombs and rockets continued to rain down and kill innocent people.

Mr. President,

4. The labouriously negotiated resolution 1701 was a better outcome than earlier proposals presented to the Council. It did envisage Israeli withdrawal, upheld Lebanon's sovereignty over all its territory and called for its reconstruction. Yet, it was not the Security Council's finest hour. After 30 days of war, the Council's resolution could only call for a "cessation of hostilities" that is unequal and incomplete. The peace that has returned is fragile. It has been violated by one party, taking advantage of the ambiguity in resolution 1701. Similar ambiguity also plagues the plan to reinforce and redeploy the UNIFIL. One thing is certain: the UN should not be expected to accomplish what could not be imposed by the resort to war. It is the responsibility of the government of Lebanon, and its armed forces, to establish its sovereignty over its own territory.

5. The international community must contribute actively to providing the urgently needed humanitarian help to the Lebanese people, including food, shelter and fuel supplies. The naval blockade, combined with the destruction of Lebanon's land communications system, is a major impediment to humanitarian relief. This blockade should be lifted immediately. Lebanon's reconstruction must be also quickly accomplished, with the generous support of the international community. Pakistan will make its due contribution to Lebanon's reconstruction and revival.

6. It is also clear, Mr. President, that this 30 days war has changed the strategic and political landscape in the Middle East. Perhaps the most far-reaching provision of resolution 1701 is its penultimate paragraph which calls for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

7. It is absolutely clear now more than ever, that none of the conflicts in the Middle East can be resolved by recourse to the use of force. Disparity in military power cannot assure the durability of a peace that is imposed against the will, aspirations and rights of a people. Even if put down once, they rise and rise again, in the legitimate quest for justice.

8. Clearly, the root cause of the Israeli-Lebanon conflict; the root cause of the Palestinian resistance; the root cause of suicide bombings and rocket attacks, is Israel's 38 year occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories. The visible and often brutal suppression of the Palestinian people is also a principal root cause of the rise of extremism across the Arab and Muslim world and of the resort to terrorism. This political reality – however unpalatable – can no longer be ignored.

Mr. President,

9. The structure of a durable peace in the Holy Land is already well known – the vision of two States – Israel and Palestine – living side by side with secure and recognized borders. To realize this vision, the Security Council must secure the non-selective implementation of its own resolutions – including 242 and 338 as well as the provisions of the Arab peace initiative and the Quartet's Road Map.

10. The most urgent task is to halt the violence in Gaza and the West Bank – both the Israeli attacks and Palestinian rockets. The captured Israeli soldiers should be released but Israel must also release the hundreds of Palestinians and Lebanese it holds, including the Palestinian ministers and parliamentarians. We hope the Palestinians will be able to unify their government and security forces. We call on Israel to halt and reverse its settlements on the West Bank, to stop the erection of the separation wall and end the economic and humanitarian blockade of the Palestinians. We urge the resumption of peace talks, without prejudice to the positions of either side. These talks should lead to early agreement to resume implementation of the agreed peace plan and the road map.

11. A parallel peace process should be revived between Syria and Israel, and lead to Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights and a peace agreement.

Mr. President,

12. No one can fail to note that today the problems affecting the Middle East extend beyond the area of the old Palestinian Mandate. The peaceful solution for the sectarian violence and the insurgency in Iraq requires the cooperation of all Iraqis, Iraq's neighbours and the international community.

13. It is Pakistan's hope that the peaceful solution of the Middle East's disputes will not be further exacerbated by arbitrary deadlines and precipitate actions on their problems in the area. This could throw further fuel into the fire in this already inflamed region.

I thank you, Mr. President.