

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations on Agenda Item 38 - 'Question of Palestine' at the United Nations General Assembly on November 23, 2015

Mr. President,

Thank you, for convening this important discussion on the Question of Palestine at the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

2. We are marking the International day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. On this important occasion, our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has sent a Message which reaffirms India's support and solidarity. In his message, the Prime Minister has stated:

Quote

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an important occasion for us to reaffirm our support for the Palestinian people's struggle for a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend heartiest congratulations to the people of Palestine on the historic installation of the national flag of Palestine at the United Nations on September 30, 2015. It is a step forward towards Palestine becoming a Member-state of the United Nations, which India fully supports.

India's ties with the friendly people of Palestine are rooted in our common history. India has always stood by the Palestinian people in pursuit of their legitimate goals and their efforts aimed at economic and social development with dignity and self-reliance. India has been extending political and diplomatic support to Palestine bilaterally as well as at international fora. We also extend budgetary support and render assistance in capacity building and human resource development initiatives of Palestinian Government.

The President of India, H.E. Mr. Pranab Mukherjee visited Palestine in October this year. This first ever State Visit provided us an opportunity to reiterate our

commitment to the Palestine and to review overall developments in the region. We remain hopeful that talks and Israeli-Palestinian negotiations will resume soon, leading to a comprehensive peace process and an amicable resolution of the conflict.

I take this opportunity to convey my greetings and best wishes to the friendly people of Palestine.

Unquote

Mr. President,

3. India continues to support development and nation-building efforts of Palestine by consistently extending technical and financial assistance. The President of India H.E. Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, during his visit, inaugurated the India-Palestine Center for Excellence in ICT in the Al Quds University and also handed over a cheque worth US\$ 5 million as a budgetary support to the Palestinian authority. Government of India has also announced its decisions to set up another such Center in Gaza with similar aims at an estimated cost of USD 1 million and an IT park in Ramallah at an estimated cost of US\$ 12 million and a Palestinian Institute of Diplomacy at an estimated cost of US\$ 4.5 million. This is a part of India's larger capacity building initiatives in Palestine.

Mr. President,

4. India also contributes US \$ 1 million annually to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). India pledged and contributed US\$ 4 million in response to the National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza. We are undertaking important bilateral development projects in health, education, skill development, vocational training as well as providing budgetary support to the Palestinian Government. Government of India has also extended budgetary assistance of US \$ 10 million and project assistance of US \$ 30 million to the Palestinian State. India has been contributing material and technical assistance to the Palestinian people. With the Government of India's aid, two projects were completed in the field of higher education i.e. Jawaharlal Nehru Library at the Al Azhar University in Gaza city and the Mahatma Gandhi Library-cum-Student Activity Centre at the Palestine Technical College at Deir Al Balah in the

Gaza Strip. Work on the project of constructing two schools in West Bank, through aid provided by India, is nearing completion. More than 12,000 Palestinians have graduated from Indian universities. Apart from 10 annual Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarships, Indian Government has been offering 100 Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) slots from which around 760 Palestinians got benefitted till now. India has also offered training to Palestinian security forces and diplomats.

Mr. President,

5. Continued violence around the holy sites of the Old City of Jerusalem is cause of concern. We call for all to show restraint, to avoid provocation and unilateral actions and to return to the peace process. We firmly believe that dialogue is the only viable option in the search for a just, durable and comprehensive peaceful solution of the Palestinian issue. We hope that both sides will demonstrate the necessary political will to return to the negotiating table and resume dialogue.

I thank you, Mr. President.
