



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

8 EAST 65th STREET – NEW YORK, NY 10021 – (212) 879-8600

**Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram,
Permanent Representative of Pakistan,
on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference
in the General Assembly on the “Question of Palestine” and “The situation in
the Middle East”
29 November, 2007**

Mr. President,

1. I have the honour to speak in this important debate on behalf of the states members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.
2. The Organization of the Islamic Conference has spelt out and reaffirmed its position on the Arab Israeli conflict including the basis and principles for achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East in its various declarations, communiqués and resolutions adopted at the Summit and Ministerial Meetings. Most recently, the 34th ICFM held in Islamabad in May and the Annual Coordination Meeting of the OIC Foreign Ministers held in New York in September reiterated these positions in support of comprehensive peace settlements on all tracks of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
3. The OIC calls for the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace based on international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) as well as agreed principles, which call for Israel's complete withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and all other occupied Arab territories including the Syrian Golan, the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and sovereignty in their independent and viable State of Palestine, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and a just resolution to the plight of the Palestine refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194(III) of 11 December 1948.

Mr. President,

4. The unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict, in particular the core issue of Palestine, arising from 40 years of occupation, constitutes a grave and persistent threat to international peace and security. This cauldron of conflicts in the Middle East has over decades, resulted in widespread death and destruction, caused misery, anger and frustration, raised emotions, and bred mistrust and antagonism between Israel and the Arab, indeed the entire Islamic world.

5. The centrality of the cause of Al-Quds Al-Sharif for the whole Islamic Ummah is clear. The Islamic world has a natural and strong emotional attachment to the issue of Palestine, as well as a deep commitment to its just and peaceful settlement. However, this desire for peace has been dashed and frustrated time and again by the efforts to prolong the illegal occupation of the Arab territories by Israel and the propensity of resolving disputes by threat and use of force. The Muslim world has been disappointed in particular by the perceived inability, at times partiality and unwillingness on part of some in the West, particularly those with power and influence, to promote just and durable solution to the crises in the Middle East. International law has been allowed to be violated with impunity. Resolutions of the Security Council and other UN bodies including this Assembly remain unimplemented. This apathy, discrimination and double standards have come to be regarded as the major underlying cause of rift and mistrust between the Western and the Islamic worlds.

6. This is an unfortunate, entirely unnecessary and unintended situation. For it is clear that the tragedy and oppression afflicted on the Palestinian people, their suffering, humiliation and human rights violations, have moved the conscience of all peace-loving peoples of the world. The just and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination and freedom from foreign occupation enjoys the strong support and solidarity of the entire international community, going beyond religious affiliations, and group and regional positions. This debate of the General Assembly, coinciding with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and 60 years of resolution 181 (II) and the Palestinian Nakba, is demonstrative of such support. It comes in the wake of discussions and adoption of numerous resolutions in the past few weeks in the Main Committees, which highlighted the political, security, human rights, humanitarian, social, economic and legal aspects arising out of the continued occupation of the Arab territories.

7. The central messages emanating from these discussions are loud and clear. It is evident that the root cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories. End to occupation of all the Arab territories is therefore a necessary pre-requisite for peace. The world can no longer afford to let the conflicts in the Middle East fester. There is a unanimous call for early comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East for which a just and final settlement of the core dispute of Palestine is imperative. There is wide consensus that this has to be a pacific settlement reached through dialogue and negotiations. This means renunciation of aggression and unilateralism as means for conflict resolution. While the craving for peace is intensifying, the futility of use of force for achieving durable solutions has become more than evident. It is now incumbent on the international community to capitalize and translate this mood into tangible results on ground.

Mr. President,

8. In that context, all recent regional and international efforts, including the revival of the Arab Peace Initiative and the Conference on Middle East hosted by the United States in Annapolis on 27 November, are praiseworthy.

9. We hope the Annapolis meeting will be the beginning of the end of the tragedy of Palestine – a dawn of peace in the Holy land. The Islamic countries participated in the

Annapolis Conference in response to the invitation from the United States to signal their commitment to just, comprehensive and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine and in the Middle East.

10. We welcome the commitment to the establishment of the Palestinian State, and the agreement to start final status negotiations to resolve all core issues including the borders, refugees, settlements and Jerusalem. To be fair, these must be resolved on the basis of the previous agreements, the relevant UN and Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Madrid Peace Conference terms of reference, the road map, and the Arab Peace Initiative. This will entail Israeli withdrawal from occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. We hope the Peace Treaty will be finalized before the end of 2008 and then be implemented earnestly. Delays and obstructions could exacerbate rather than enhance the prospects for peace.

Mr. President,

11. Last week marked the 40th anniversary of adoption of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). The provisions and principles for a just and lasting settlement set out in that resolution; the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war, withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict, a just settlement of the refugee problem, among others, remain as relevant today as they were 40 years ago. We believe a peace agreement reached through forthcoming negotiations will need to be supplemented by appropriate mechanisms and guarantees for their fair and full implementation by all sides. The Security Council and the General Assembly should play their rightful roles in this regard.

12. In the meanwhile, it is important to build an environment of trust and confidence to support the peace process. We remain deeply concerned over the continuing plight of the Palestinian people, their humiliation and collective punishment under Israeli occupation. The Palestinian people continue to be the victims of violence and military aggression, grave human rights violations, socio-economic deprivation and strangulation, affecting all aspects of their lives. The dire situation in the occupied territories is depicted in detail in various UN and other reports. The international community must ensure full compliance by Israel of its obligations under the 4th Geneva Convention applicable to all the occupied territories. Israel must also end policies and actions that seek to change the realities on ground that could prejudice final settlement, including the integrity and viability of the future Palestinian state.

13. There are some immediate requirements to create the conditions for success:

One Bringing about a rapid and tangible improvement of the situation on ground in the occupied territories; ending the oppression and suffering of the Palestinian people, ceasing of military campaigns by Israel, releasing of prisoners, halting the construction of the illegal separation wall, freezing settlement activities, dismantling unauthorized settler outposts, removing all kinds of blockades and restrictions, ending the siege of Gaza and its illegal declaration by Israel as an "enemy entity", and ending of violence;

Two Providing enhanced humanitarian, economic and social support by the international community to the Palestinians; including immediate restoration and unimpeded provision of all essential goods and services to the Palestinian people in all the occupied territories.

Three Providing support to the Palestinian Authority for building state institutions including security apparatuses. We look forward to a successful donors conference in Paris in this regard.

14. Obviously, together with the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, efforts must continue to revive Palestinian unity. Durable peace is impossible with a divided people. An essential step to reach reconciliation is for the situation that exists on the ground in Gaza to be restituted to that which existed prior to the events of June 2007.

15. The discussions in Annapolis also recognized the crucial importance of addressing all aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Syria-Israel and Lebanon-Israel tracks in order to achieve comprehensive peace. We hope to see progress on these parallel tracks with a view to reaching lasting settlements. Israel must withdraw completely from Lebanese land, and the occupied Syrian Golan and comply fully with Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

Mr. President,

16. Today, we are at yet another crucial juncture in the search for lasting peace in the Middle East. As leaders have said in Annapolis, time is ripe for concluding peace. But, time is not unlimited. The consequences of failure are dire – the rise of extremism and violence that could engulf the entire Middle East.

17. Therefore, an early comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict including the core issue of Palestine should be our collective strategic objective. We must pledge our complete commitment to this objective, and throw our full moral, diplomatic, political and economic support for its early realization. Indeed this would bring a positive impact on regional and international peace and security and help stabilize the other simmering situations in the region. While remaining fully committed to the just cause of the Palestinian people, the Organization of the Islamic Conference will play its rightful role in this collective endeavour of establishing lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Thank you.