

Speech of

Shri E. Ahamed  
Minister of State for External Affairs  
at

**“International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People”**

at

Indian Council of World Affairs,  
Sapru House, New Delhi  
January 28, 2011

H.E. Ambassador of Palestine in India, Mr. Adli Hassan Shaban Sadeq,

DG, Indian Council of World Affairs, Shri Sudhir Devare

Excellencies, distinguished invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel honoured to be here today amidst this august gathering to mark the important occasion of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. All of us present here, representing a wide cross-section of countries, in our own ways are here to express our solidarity with the people of Palestine in their struggle for their legitimate rights. Our gestures of support also convey that it is in the interest of the entire international community that a lasting solution is found at the earliest resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders with East Jerusalem as its Capital, side by side and at peace with the State of Israel.

Excellencies,

Indians have always placed Palestine close to their hearts. Even before independence, India had demonstrated its solidarity with the Palestinian people and had looked forward to the emergence of an independent democratic state in Palestine in which the rights of all communities would be protected.

India was the first non-Arab State to recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in 1975 and in 1988 it became one of the first countries to recognize the State of Palestine. India opened its Representative Office in Palestine in 1996 following the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority. Here I would like to quote from a communication from a cable by then Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi addressed to President Yasser Arafat:

“It is with great pleasure that I extend to you on behalf of the Government and people of India and on my own behalf our heartiest felicitations on the declaration of an independent State of Palestine to which the Government of India has today extended formal recognition. This has been our cherished and single-minded objective all these years. We share the happiness of the Palestinian people on this auspicious day.

We are conscious that it is not the end of the struggle. It is nevertheless an important milestone on the path to meeting the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians within and outside the occupied territories. We wish you all success in your task of achieving the logical culmination of this declaration – the restoration of Palestinian land and the assertion of Palestinian sovereignty. India will continue to extend whole-hearted support to efforts to activate early peace negotiations for a just and comprehensive settlement within the framework of a UN-sponsored International Conference.”

India has and will always support the Palestinian people in their pursuit of legitimate goals and quest for development based on dignity and self-reliance. I recall my meeting with the then President of Palestine Authority Mr. Yasser Arafat on 17th September, 2004 when I carried the Goodwill Message from the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India alongwith life saving medicines and special vehicles to the Palestine Authority. India reiterates its unwavering support to the Palestinian cause at every available opportunity and forum and that includes the visit of the Hon’ble President to Syria from 26-29 November 2010 and by Hon’ble Prime Minister in his message on the occasion of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, organized by the UN on 29 November 2010.

Excellencies,

Since the opening of the Representative Office, India has also extended material assistance to the Palestinian National Authority. The assistance has been for humanitarian relief, development projects, establishment of educational and training facilities, budgetary support etc. India has been involved with training a large number of Palestinian officials from economic, industrial and financial sectors and special courses for Palestinian diplomats have been conducted at our Foreign Service Institute. India extended further budgetary support of US\$ 10 million to the Palestine National Authority earlier this year in addition to a similar contribution last year, to assist in their work of reconstruction and development. As you may also be aware, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), India

increased its annual contribution to US\$ 1 million from last year. We have also pledged to contribute this amount next year as well.

Under the IBSA Fund, along with Brazil and South Africa, we are implementing a Sports Complex in Ramallah.

We believe the West Asian region is of vital importance to India with more than 4.5 million Indians making it their home. The region is also an important source of energy for India. India wishes to see the creation of an environment for the earliest possible resumption of dialogue. We share the perception that the conflict in West Asia is essentially political in nature and cannot be resolved by force. In line with our support for United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, India supports a negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders with East Jerusalem as its Capital, side by side and at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap and United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1397 & 1515.

India has supported the Arab Peace Plan, which calls for withdrawal of Israel to pre-1967 borders, along with recognition of Israel and the establishment of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. India has called for an end to Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and for an early and significant easing of restrictions on the free movement of persons and goods within Palestine.

India had welcomed the 'direct talks' between Israel and Palestine. The continued stalemate in the situation and hardening of positions is a matter of concern. We hope that the talks would be resumed leading to final resolution of the conflict. As a responsible member of the international community and as a country with long-established ties with West Asia, India desires to see a peaceful resolution to tensions in the region through peaceful dialogue.

I am happy to note that the Palestinian Embassy has started functioning from its new Building in Chanakyapuri, which was built as a gift of the government and people of India. The foundation stone of the Building was laid in the presence of our Prime Minister during the visit of the Palestinian President Mr. Mahmoud Abbas to India in October 2008.

On this occasion, I would like to re-affirm India's consistent and unwavering support to the friendly people of Palestine and reiterate India's belief that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region can be achieved through negotiations and dialogue so that a sovereign, independent, viable State of Palestine living side by side within secured borders, with the State of Israel, becomes a reality.

I thank the Indian Council for World Affairs for organizing this event. Thank you, Jai Hind.