

Statement by Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, Permanent Representative, at the UN Security Council Open Debate on “Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Settlement of Conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and Countering the Terrorist Threat in the Region”, on September 30, 2015

Mr. President,

1. Thank you for organizing today’s debate. We thank today’s briefers for their comprehensive briefing on this important topic. We appreciate your circulating a very useful concept note in this context.

Mr. President,

2. The situation in the Middle East region continues to remain fragile and unpredictable with unprecedented changes in several countries in the region. The ongoing conflict in Syria; the ISIS buildup and new flash points as in Yemen are examples of this. Besides having implications for peace and stability, the conflicts also impose serious economic costs for the region and the whole world, which will have a major impact on the prospects for implementing the objectives of Agenda 2030 for development, which our leaders have unanimously adopted just last week.

3. The concept note correctly emphasizes the need for politically negotiated solutions to conflicts. It clearly delineates three important measures which all of us as the international community should take- countering terrorism, overcoming interreligious and sectarian discord, and extending humanitarian assistance. All conflicts result in uprooting the lives and aspirations of ordinary people, and we therefore expect the Council to invest more in political efforts to resolve these conflicts.

Mr. President,

4. We are deeply concerned at the ongoing violence in Syria and loss of human lives. India has consistently called for a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the crisis, bringing all parties to the conflict to the negotiating table. It has to be a Syrian-led process, taking into account the legitimate aspirations of the people of Syria. There can be no military solution. We welcome all initiatives in this direction, including efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura for re-starting the political talks.

5. Our position on the Middle East Peace Process is also very clear. India supports a negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap and relevant UNSC Resolutions. India has always played a proactive role in garnering support for the Palestinian cause in multilateral fora. We supported the recent vote in the General Assembly on raising the flags of non-member observer states.

6. We are deeply alarmed at the ongoing violence and intensified militia warfare in Libya. We call for continued political negotiations. The situation in Iraq is a matter of concern for the entire comity of nations. We are particularly concerned at the spill over effects of the instability in Iraq resulting from increased terrorist activities in the region. We strongly support the Iraqi people and the government in their efforts to overcome the crisis, uphold national sovereignty and preserve the territorial integrity.

7. India remains deeply concerned about the worsening political and security situation in Yemen. We have been urging all concerned parties in Yemen to amicably resolve their differences and we hope that the UN-mediation efforts would assist the people of Yemen in finding a consensus-based solution.

Mr. President,

8. It is our view that the prerogative of national authorities to resolve internal crises should be respected as a cardinal principle. We are convinced that the interventionist trend, using humanitarian concerns as a pretext, runs the danger of exacerbating conflict between and within countries.

Mr. President,

9. India is committed to combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. India believes in a comprehensive approach to counter the threat posed by ISIS and other terrorist groups and individuals. The Council should be more transparent and uncompromising when considering and adopting its decisions on countering terrorism. India stands ready to extend full cooperation to the Council in countering terrorism.

Mr. President,

10. The Concept note asks what needs to be done to see that the Council's resolutions are implemented. The ineffectiveness of the Council is rooted in the nature and working procedures of this organ. We must implement the mandate of our leaders, given ten years ago, for early reforms of the Council to make it more effective and representative. This would impact not only on the conventional crises the Council is called upon to resolve, but more so to the new and emerging challenges to international peace and security, especially those posed by terrorism. We therefore hope that this debate will endorse action by the United Nations during its ongoing 70th anniversary session to conclude negotiations on reforming the Council, so that the Council can play an important role in ensuring a strongly supportive international environment for our collective efforts to eradicate poverty within a generation while implementing Agenda 2030.

I thank you.