

INDIA SPEAKS

(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)

No. 22

May 2011

Bilateral Issues

a. Iraq

1. Mr. S.K. Reddy appointed as Ambassador of India to Iraq, New Delhi, 4 April 2011

Mr. S.K. Reddy, Joint Secretary at headquarters has been appointed as the Ambassador of India to Iraq. He is expected to take up his assignment shortly.

Source: MEA (Ministry of External Affairs), New Delhi

<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217514>

b. Kuwait

2. The Minister of State Petroleum and Natural Gas Mr. R. P. N. Singh at 4th Asian Energy Ministerial Round Table held at Kuwait, Kuwait City, 18 April 2011

Mr. Singh also had bilateral meeting with Oil Minister of Kuwait Mr Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on the sidelines of the Ministerial Roundtable for enhancing bilateral cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector. The Minister urged the Kuwaiti side to increase crude oil supplies in the coming years in view of the significant increase in the country's refining capacity, with the Bhatinda, Bina and Paradip refineries expected to be commissioned by March 2012. The Minister also invited Kuwaiti participation in the upcoming petrochemicals projects of OpaL and OMPL at Dahej and Mangalore respectively. Other issues such as India's participation in the bio-remediation of the oil spills in Kuwait, EIL's participation in EPC jobs in

Kuwait, India's assistance in helping Kuwait set up its Research and Training Centre were also discussed.

Source: PIB, New Delhi <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=71740>

c. Morocco

3. Mr. Anand Sharma Co-Chairs the 4th Session of India-Morocco Joint Commission Meeting

Mr. Anand Sharma, Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, met with the Moroccan Minister of Trade Finance, Mr. Abdellatif Mazouz here today and discussed bilateral relations and economic cooperation. Mr. Sharma and Mr Mazouz were Co-chairing the 4th Session of India-Morocco Joint Commission Meeting. The Minister expressed satisfaction over the deepening trade and investment engagement between the two countries. Mr. Sharma stated that, “There were possibilities of expanding this tie-up further. There are immense possibilities for trade in Agricultural Commodities and Food Processing.” He stressed out the need to shift the focus of Indo-Moroccan Trade from inorganic chemicals and fertilizers to other sectors. “The SMEs of the two countries need to collaborate with each other. He also stressed upon the importance of a more liberal visa policy in case the trade ties were to be expanded further,” he added.

The Moroccan side informed that there are good possibilities of investment and partnerships in several fields and sectors in Morocco to gain direct and preferential access to European, African, Arabic and American markets provided by FTAs signed by Morocco at bilateral and regional levels. Both sides agreed to encourage such investments. The Moroccan side also proposed exploring the possibilities of tripartite cooperation involving Morocco, India and Sub-Saharan African countries.

In order to develop Morocco-India customs cooperation, the Moroccan Party proposed to conclude a mutual administrative assistance agreement providing for prevention, investigation and punishment for customs crimes; encourage transparency in commercial regulations set up a framework encouraging expertise and experience exchange in the field of customs. Indian side took note of the proposal;

The National Board of Electricity (ONE) of Morocco proposed to implement partnership with its Indian counterparts in energy efficiency; rural electrification; Execution of transport networks and production facilities related to the transport network. They also proposed to establish strategic partnerships with the Indian Industrial operators for executing projects, especially in Africa

Both the sides agreed to establish a partnership between the National Agency for the Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (ANPME) and the National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC).

Bilateral trade has grown from US\$ 573.87 million in 2005 to US\$ 1.712 billion in 2010 with balance of trade in favour of Morocco (US\$ 611 million). The major portion of bilateral trade is made up of import of Phosphates and Fertilizers by India and import of Textiles, Transport Equipment and Machinery by Morocco. Both sides further noted that there are synergies between the Trade requirements of the two countries and agreed that there is a huge potential for expanding and deepening the bilateral trade. Both sides, therefore, expressed their desire to explore new opportunities in Trade and Investment for mutual benefit of the two countries.

Both Parties agreed that the potential sectors of cooperation are Chemical and Fertilizers, Mining, Information Technology, Agro-processing, Pharmaceuticals, Automobiles, Tourism and textiles. Concerted efforts by the Industry Associations of both the countries are needed for promoting bilateral investment flows in the potential sectors by organizing Investment Promotion Events, CEOs Roundtables, Road Shows and Fairs.

Source: PIB, New Delhi <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=71877>

d. Sudan and South Sudan

4. Briefing by Official Spokesperson on visits of Envoys from Sudan and South Sudan, New Delhi, 28 April 2011

Official Spokesperson (Mr. Vishnu Prakash): Good afternoon. Let me introduce my colleague Mr. Rajeev Shahare, Joint Secretary (WANA) – that is West Asia and North Africa.

Yesterday and today the External Affairs Minister (EAM) has received and has had very good exchange of views with the Special Envoys of Sudan and that of Government of Southern Sudan.

Foreign Minister Ali Ahmed Karti of Sudan was in New Delhi from the 26th to 28th of April. Dr. Priscilla Joseph Kuch, Minister in the Office of the President of the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) , arrived yesterday and would be in India for a couple of days. Today she held delegation-level talks with EAM and would be calling on the Vice-President of India shortly.

India and Sudan have traditionally enjoyed cordial and friendly ties. Sudan is home to some 10,000 persons of Indian origin as well as non-resident Indians.

The country emerged from a long civil war with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Nairobi on 9th January, 2005 between the Government of Sudan and Sudan People's Liberation movement. This eventually led to a referendum between 9th to 16th January this year when 98.3 per cent of the population in Southern Sudan voted for seceding from the North. As such, a new country called Republic of South Sudan is poised to formally emerge on the 9th July 2011.

EAM congratulated the Foreign Minister of Sudan for successful conduct of a referendum in a fair and peaceful fashion. He reiterated India's pledge to continue to be a development partner of Sudan and to extend all possible assistance in development of infrastructure, capacity-building, human resource development, etc.

In 2010 India provided 130 ITEC scholarships to Sudan besides 20 scholarships through ICCR for graduate, post-graduate and Ph.D. courses. During the current financial year, in addition to the above, ten agricultural scholarships for Ph.D. and M.Sc. under the India-Africa Plan would also be provided to Sudan. Sudanese diplomats have been attending the Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats at the Foreign Service Institute. Their defence personnel have been attending short duration peace-keeping courses at the United Services Institute.

What is more, India has always been a preferred destination for Sudanese students, especially in cities like Pune, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bangalore. It is estimated that currently over 3000 Sudanese students are studying in India. Over the years, more than 30,000 Sudanese students have graduated from India and currently occupy very important positions in the government, in politics, in business and are of course maintaining their affection for India.

India has also played a vital role in promoting and maintaining peace in Sudan with some one-third of the total UN contingent comprising of Indian defence personnel. The Indian contingent have, with their exemplary conduct, with their work in development of social infrastructure in Sudan, won numerous hearts and minds. What they have been doing has not only benefited but has also been greatly appreciated by the community.

Over the years India has been extending lines of credit (LOC), currently amounting to 566 million dollars. These LOCs are extended on very soft terms, and I must say that Sudan has utilized them very effectively along with their Indian partners in creating productive and useful infrastructure including a 500 MW thermal power station in Kosti that is likely to be completed soon at a cost of 350 million dollars. Other projects already undertaken by Sudan and India together utilizing the LOCs include power transmission lines, railway lines, a cement factory, a sugar mill and so on.

At the same time, Indian public sector and private sector companies have made substantial investments in Sudan which exceeds 2.5 billion dollars including sizeable stakes in hydrocarbon assets that are owned by ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL). Besides OVL a number of prominent Indian companies are present in Sudan which includes BHEL, TCIL, RITES, Bharat Electronics Limited, Kirloskar, L&T, and the others.

Sudan is one of the prominent producers of hydrocarbons in Africa besides Nigeria and Angola, and our cooperation with Sudan constitutes an important element in our quest for energy security. We have also established an India-Sudan Joint Working Group on cooperation in the oil and gas sector, and the first meeting of the JWG was held in Khartoum in November last year.

One of our initiatives which has been very well received in Sudan is the solar electrification project. The first such project was undertaken in April 2006, in Khadarab village, which is about

a two-hour drive from Khartoum. The solar electrification project brought electricity for the first time ever to homes of 1500 villagers literally transforming their lives. And such was the impact that many similar projects are currently in the pipeline. Not only that, Central Electronics Limited (CEL) also set up a plant for assembling solar photo voltaic panels at The Energy Research Institute in Khartoum which was inaugurated by the President of Sudan in 2007.

Sudan is a member of the Pan-African E-Network. Also our trade is now close to a billion dollars and has tripled in the last eight to nine years. What is more, it is evenly balanced. India has been exporting a series of engineering goods, machinery, equipment, automobiles, pharmaceutical products, etc. Tata buses, auto-rickshaws basically dominate the roads in Sudan.

India has similarly maintained good presence and contacts in Southern Sudan. Our MOS for External Affairs was present at the signing of CPA in Nairobi on the 9th January, 2005. India was amongst the first Asian countries to set up a Consulate General in Juba in October 2007, which would soon be upgraded to the level of an Embassy.

We have in the past few years been helping GOSS in human resource development and capacity-building in particular. They have been taking advantage of ITEC slots. Also their officials have been receiving training at the Foreign Service Institute. We have already had very useful Parliamentary exchanges.

It is understood from the discussions with GOSS that their biggest priorities at the moment are development of agriculture, because 80 per cent of their population is dependent on agriculture. Also rural development, education and health sectors are major priorities. These are some of the sectors in which India can and is quite willing to play a useful role.

I mentioned the solar electrification project. Another such project is currently being replicated at Juba itself. Talking of the health sector, already representatives of some of the Indian hospitals including Fortis of Bangalore and Miot of Chennai have sent their teams for exploratory talks with the hospitals and health authorities in Southern Sudan. They have made presentations, conducted workshops, and also organized some medical camps.

I am happy to say that India enjoys considerable goodwill in Southern Sudan and Dr. Priscilla's visit is the first formal high-level contact between GOSS and India. She invited the Indian leadership to Juba on 9th July to witness the birth of a new nation and to participate in their celebrations. She also sought India's support at the UNGA and other fora for recognition of Southern Sudan as a new nation. She particularly sought India's assistance in development of sectors like agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, rural development, health and education, technical training, HRD, hydrocarbons, and also in de-mining because the long years of decades of civil war have left quite a few areas in Southern Sudan heavily mined.

EAM spoke of India's strong links with Southern Sudan; congratulated his interlocutor on the peaceful and successful transition that is currently under way; and reiterated India's commitment to extend all possible assistance to the Government and the people of Southern Sudan.

The country is resource rich and blessed with fertile soil as a gift of the White Nile. It is understood that despite almost 90 per cent of the land being arable, currently under 20 per cent is under cultivation and that makes Agriculture an important area of cooperation for us. And as I said, GOSS is according strong priority to development of the agricultural sector on which 80 per cent of the people are dependent.

So, this is a flavour of the discussions that EAM had with both his interlocutors, and we wanted to give you a sense of that. My colleague and I will be happy to take your questions on the visit of the two Special Envoys.

Question: Will the upgradation of our Consulate General to that of an Embassy happen before the country becomes independent? When are the Southern Sudanese going to open their own Embassy in Delhi? And during the talks here did India make any offer of any specific amount of money or are they going to send a delegation of experts to explore things?

Joint Secretary (WANA) (Mr. Rajeev Shahare): These are the logical questions whenever a new country comes into existence. This was our first contact with the representative from the Government of South Sudan. We have a Consulate in Juba, like you have rightly pointed out, which was opened three years back. The representative of the President of the Government of Southern Sudan Dr. Priscilla conveyed her very deep appreciation that India was one of the first countries that opened their Consulate. We shall certainly upgrade the Consulate. To start with, the present incumbent will be designated as Charge d'affaires. But before that we will be also sending our own delegation. It will be a multi-disciplinary delegation from various Ministries and agencies looking at our engagement and the proposed engagement with the Government of Southern Sudan. As mentioned by the Official Spokesperson, from the Ministries of Agriculture, Rural Development, Petroleum and Natural Gas, ONGC Videsh Limited, on other capacity-building such as education, training, we will be carrying a very large delegation to Government of Sudan and we are engaging them on these issues. Certainly these are the milestones which we will be looking at with regard to re-nomenclature of our present Consulate. The various steps that need to be taken whenever a new country comes into existence, all these will be taken in due course of time. The fact that we have had the first exposure, the first meeting with the Government of South Sudan itself and their appreciation for India's stand on various issues so far, whatever we have done for Southern Sudan, they are extremely appreciative of that, and we intend to also deepen our engagement with the Government of South Sudan.

Question: OVL has invested considerably ... (Unclear)... and the trade figures do not seem to include that amount.

Joint Secretary (WANA): Very true. What the Official Spokesman has given is the non-oil figure.

Question: Have we recovered all the money we invested there? We have been getting oil from Sudan for several years now.

Joint Secretary (WANA): I will tell you. We are getting almost 160,000 barrels a day. That is our production there. You are right, it started with a billion dollars or so and right now it is around 2.4 billion dollars, just that of OVL. Quite a bit of the oil which we get is located in Southern Sudan. I would say around 100,000 barrels or more than that is located in the Southern Sudan region. We are looking at a very very substantial engagement with Southern Sudan on this sector. Might I also add that OVL are already in engagement with the Southern Sudan leadership; they have offered them training; they have offered them many things to go beyond the present relationship and present engagement.

Question: Can you tell us what is the situation politically in Darfur areas because we have been taking about Darfur for quite some time? Secondly, what kind of efforts are we going to introduce so far as recognition of Southern Sudan is concerned in UNGA? You have said we have taken some efforts.

Official Spokesperson: As far as the recognition of Southern Sudan is concerned as a nation, what we understand is that the African Union has already accorded recognition; the Arab League is agreeable in principle; and let us just say for this purpose Northern Sudan and Southern Sudan are also agreeable on this; this all stems from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that was signed in Nairobi in January 2005 and which was hammered out through a cooperative process also involving different countries. It took many years in the making. We are given to understand that a number of other countries including some of the key nations are also on board. Short point is that they have sought India's support in the matter. You would recall that we had welcomed the outcome of the referendum. As I said, EAM congratulated and commended the Government of Sudan for conducting the referendum in a peaceful and a fair manner. So, we would of course extend whatever assistance that we can as a member of UN, as a nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council, in this matter.

As far as the issue of Darfur is concerned, suffice it to say that we would like to see the issue resolved in a peaceful manner consistent with Sudan's unity and territorial integrity.

Question: Of the 160,000 barrels produced by OVL, is India getting 50:50 or is it less?

Official Spokesperson: 160,000 barrels is India's share. We have about 25 per cent stake in the facilities there and our share is 160,000 barrels per day which is then brought to India through Port Sudan.

Question: Just a clarification on the oil assets in Southern Sudan. What is their status? Was it brought up in the talks by either the Indian side or the Southern Sudanese side? Will those contracts be honoured or will they be redrafted?

Official Spokesperson: This was touched upon. As the Government of Southern Sudan is getting about consolidating, furthering the transition and going about in the process of nation-building, they are obviously taking stock of all the contracts, agreements and so on. Our understanding is that the agreements and the contracts pertaining to India will be honoured.

Question: Sir, has the representative of Southern Sudan visited other Asian countries or is India the first?

Official Spokesperson: That is a question that you need to ask her.

Question: As far as the bifurcation of Sudan is concerned, it was a very sensitive and tricky issue. How did we reach the decision that we should support the bifurcation? Was it done after the referendum was over or before?

Official Spokesperson: There were long years of civil war. It has been quite a traumatic civil war. It has been a conflict in which hundreds of thousands of people have perished. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement was a consequence of the long struggle. It was signed in Nairobi, was hammered out with the good offices of the international community, and this is January, 2005. Our MOS for External Affairs was present on that important occasion and everything has kind of flown from that. Gradually, our engagement with GOSS took shape; it was gradually increased, I have already given you a flavor. Then in 2007 we set up our Consulate General. We were one of the first Asian countries to do so. That is how we have gone about it along with members of the international community.

Question: Is Dr. Priscilla going to visit any other city or is she going to be here only?

Official Spokesperson: She will be in Delhi and she returns home on the 30th.

Question: On 9th July, who would be going from India? Has any decision been taken?

Official Spokesperson: That decision will be taken. She has extended a very cordial invitation to Indian leadership to be present on that momentous occasion for that new country which will come into being formally on the 9th of July.

Question: Are they going for parliamentary democracy or something like that?

Official Spokesperson: We are told today that they are in the process of drafting their Constitution; there will be a Constituent Assembly; and the Constituent Assembly will then go about deciding whether they would have a parliamentary form of government or some other. Indications are that there will be a bicameral parliament. That is what they are mentioning. But obviously this is nation-building and they will go about it as per the will of the people, as per the genius of the people.

Question: Are you having the same warmth with Southern Sudan also?

Official Spokesperson: I did mention that we traditionally have had very good relations, with Sudan. The role that India has played, has been a constructive, has been positive, has been a proper and correct role. That is something which has been deeply appreciated and conveyed to us by GOSS. You have the Special Envoy of the President of GOSS visiting us and we have,

through our Consulate in Juba and through our Ambassador in Khartoum, maintained close and regular contacts.

Question: Considering first election in Sudan was conducted by Sukumar Sen in the 1950s and considering that the South Africans sought our help to write their Constitution and all that, have the Southern Sudanese approached us for any help in putting together their Constitution? Have they sought any experts from India?

Official Spokesperson: There is one principle of our engagement with any country and that is that we go according to the wishes and aspirations of those countries, be it in our neighbourhood, be it in Africa. Today, the discussion veered around cooperation in certain areas which I have already enumerated. We have also decided to work on a roadmap of cooperation and that is precisely why in the next few weeks we would be sending a multi-sectoral delegation representing different Ministries and Departments to Sudan. They will be going to Khartoum, they will be going to Juba. Some of the suggestions and thoughts we have taken onboard which they made today so we can respond to that. And depending on what their wishes are and depending on what our capacity is, we will take a view in the matter.

Question: China has been investing about ...(Unclear)... billion US dollars in Sudan's oil reserves. Do you think there is cooperation between India and China as far as investing in Sudan is concerned? Can you throw light on that?

Official Spokesperson: What I know is that amongst the major countries which have a sizeable presence in the hydrocarbons sector in Sudan, as you rightly said, are China, India and Malaysia. There is also a Memorandum of Understanding between India and China on cooperation in Hydrocarbon sector, which I think was signed, if I remember right, sometime in 2005. We have agreed that we will cooperate wherever we can, including if there are possibilities or joint exploration, joint acquisition of assets, etc., training, various things. And it also says that we can cooperate and we can compete because both China and India have huge energy needs and our dependence on imported energy is high. So, that is the broad framework. But here as far as Sudan is concerned, I believe that in some of the assets that we have, we have a certain stake, the Chinese have a certain stake, the Malaysians have a certain stake in the same assets.

Question: On solar panels, is it a grant or is it a loan?

Official Spokesperson: The first one which I mentioned was out of a grant which was operationalised in 2006. Since then we are replicating this in a number of areas. So, I can check whether that is out of grant or that is out of ...

Question: They have huge oil resources. Why are we installing solar panels?

Official Spokesperson: And we are also building a thermal power station which is 500 MW.

Question: Then, congratulations.

Official Spokesperson: Thank you very much.

All right. I think we have run out of questions. Thank you.

Source: MEA, New Delhi <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530317583>

Specific Issues

e. Palestinian Question

5. Statement by Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri Acting Permanent Representative on “The Situation in the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question” in the Security Council, New York, 21 April 2011

Thank you, Mr. President.

I would like to join other colleagues in thanking Under Secretary General Mr. Lynn Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements which we have carefully noted.

Mr. President,

The situation in the Middle East continues to be grim with no sign of movement in peace talks. The expectation that Quartet would meet on 15th April and come up with a statement to enable both Palestinians and Israelis to resume talks has again not materialized. Lack of movement in even holding of talks is also contributing to increase in violence.

Moreover, it is imperative that hopes raised for a Palestinian State during last two years are not lost. The state building efforts of the Palestinian Authority have received commendations from various quarters including financial institutions like IMF and World Bank. The April 2011 report of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process is the latest to endorse the achievements of the Palestinian Authority.

The report makes it amply clear that the progress made in rule of law and human rights, livelihoods and productive sectors, education and culture, health, social protection, and infrastructure and water are now sufficient for a functioning government of a State. The Palestinian Authority has, therefore, shown its determination to persist with Prime Minister Fayyad’s Plan for achieving statehood. As we approach September 2011, these developments on the governance front should inject a sense of urgency for international efforts to resume peace talks.

Mr. President,

The main hindrance for resumption of peace talks is lack of mutual trust. Statements on existence of Israel, emanating from different sections of the Palestinian society, now and then only serve to aggravate this lack of mutual trust. Perception that these statements and continuing rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip against Israel increase the vulnerability of Israel needs to be viewed in this context. The recent spate of violence, including retaliation on Gaza after an attack on a school bus in Southern Israel, clearly shows the divisions that exist. These events deserve our strongest condemnation. We also condemn the killing of abducted Italian national in Gaza last week.

While we commend achievements in the territories administered by the Palestinian Authority, it is equally important to note the reason for the deplorable situation in Gaza, where even essentials are difficult to come by. The blockade on Gaza is adversely affecting the population who barely has access to essential commodities. The access of Gaza to essential commodities is imperative as it is also driving militant elements to vent their frustration through violence. Given this situation, humanitarian assistance to Gaza and its delivery should not exacerbate the precarious security situation. It would be prudent if established channels for delivery of humanitarian assistance are used. At the same time these channels must step up the efficacy of their delivery systems and look at stronger and more effective mechanisms for delivering humanitarian assistance.

We concur with the sense of the international community that freezing of settlement activity in the Palestinian territories could enable the peace talks to resume. Lack of unity among Palestinian factions is another major issue. We note the recent initiatives aimed at promoting intra-Palestinian unity and hope they would result in a meaningful rapprochement among various Palestinian groups.

Equally important are other issues enmeshed to the conflict relating to Arab lands that remain under Israeli occupation. Progress in the Lebanese and Syrian tracks is core to achievement of a comprehensive and durable peace in the region. In a region witnessing protests movements all around, continuing impasse in peace talks could have destabilizing effect on a much larger area. If the peace talks do not recommence quickly, we are afraid, unilateral steps by the parties would only increase the distance between them and further complicate the situation. We, therefore, call on the Quartet members to intensify their collective and individual efforts to break the stalemate.

Mr President, India has a long-standing tradition of solidarity with the Palestinian people. India has supported 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, as endorsed in the Arab Peace initiative, Quartet Roadmap and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

India has been contributing to the capacity and institution building of the Palestinian people with its material and technical assistance programmes. India has also extended assistance through IBSA forum. India is also contributing US\$ 1 million to UNRWA continuing our solidarity with the Palestinian people in their pursuit of legitimate goals and quest for development based on dignity and self-reliance.

In conclusion, Mr. President, let me quote from a letter our first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote on 11 July 1947 to Albert Einstein. He wrote: “I do not myself see how this problem can be resolved by violence and conflict on one side or the other. Even if such violence and conflict achieve certain ends for the moment, they must necessarily be temporary. I do earnestly hope that some kind of agreement might be arrived at between the Arabs and the Jews. I do not think even an outside power can impose its will for long or enforce some new arrangements against the will of the parties concerned”. These words were relevant more than 60 years back. They are even more relevant now. Agreement has to be reached between the parties through direct negotiations for it to be enduring.

To that end, we hope, parties will restart talks without further delay. Our expectation is that these talks would lead to a final and comprehensive resolution of the Middle East conflict, which has mired several generations in the region. We all owe to the future generations that they do not remain mired in this conflict. We, therefore, reiterate our call to both sides to show spirit of flexibility, compromise and political will to reach there.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Source: Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York
<http://www.un.int/india/2011/ind1850.pdf>

f. Situation in Syria

6. Statement by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative, at the United Nations Security Council open briefing on the situation in Syria on, New York, 27 April 2011

Thank you, Mr. President,

We thank Under Secretary General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing on the situation in Syria.

Mr. President,

Syria has, historically and in contemporary times, been an important country in the Middle East. Its role in the Middle East peace process and in the stability of the wider region cannot be underemphasized. Thus, prolonged instability or unrest in Syria may have ramifications for the region and beyond.

Reports of violence during the recent demonstrations in parts of Syria resulting in the deaths of several demonstrators as well as security personnel are of concern. There have been reports of armed extremist elements mingling with the demonstrators and using the demonstrations to attack security personnel and damage government property and there is an apparent lack of information regarding those responsible for these violent attacks.

We have noted that the Government of Syria has appointed a Commission of Inquiry into the violence during the demonstrations and announced various measures to address the grievances of its people, including lifting of emergency laws, abolition of State Security Courts, transfer of investigative powers to the police etc. The Government has also announced procedures for organizing peaceful demonstrations. We hope these measures initiated by the Syrian government, as part of an inclusive process of political dialogue and reform, will initiate the process of meeting the aspirations of all sections of Syrian society.

As we deplore any violence from any quarter, the Council needs to make clear that it is the responsibility of sovereign states to respond to the aspirations of its people through administrative, political, economic and other measures. At the same time, it is for states to decide on the best course of action to maintain internal law and order and to prevent violence. The primary responsibility of the Council in this particular instance is to urge all sides to abjure violence in any form and to seek a resolution of grievances through peaceful means.

We believe regional and sub regional organizations have an important role to play in resolving the crisis in the region, including in Syria. It is essential that all efforts should be made to de-escalate tensions, rather than to exacerbate them. My delegation would support all measures designed to end violence and restore peace.

Thank you.

Source: Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York
<http://www.un.int/india/2011/ind1851.pdf>

Multilateral Issues/ Regional Issues

g. India and the Middle East/ West Asia

7. Briefing by NSA on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's meetings with Chinese and Russian Presidents, Sanya, 13 April 2011

...There was a discussion also on the situation in West Asia and North Africa, and the effects that will have not only on the international system but also on energy security and on how it will affect the future. That is a discussion which, as I said, is likely to continue tomorrow when the leaders of BRICS are together because it affects us all. I think it is a discussion which will continue...

Source: MEA, New Delhi <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530317539>

8. Prime Minister Mr. Manmohan Singh's Statement at Joint Press Conference at the BRICS Summit, Sanya, 14 April 2011

The developments in West Asia and North Africa and the aftermath of the huge tragedy that befell Japan have introduced fresh uncertainties in the global recovery process. At the same time, the world continues to grapple with threats to security from terrorism and piracy.

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB), New Delhi
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=71628>

9. Sanya Declaration, Sanya, 14 April 2011

...We are deeply concerned with the turbulence in the Middle East, the North African and West African regions and sincerely wish that the countries affected achieve peace, stability, prosperity and progress and enjoy their due standing and dignity in the world according to legitimate aspirations of their peoples. We share the principle that the use of force should be avoided. We maintain that the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of each nation should be respected.

Source: PIB, New Delhi <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=71629>

10. Prime Minister's Media Interaction Onboard Special Aircraft, 16 April 2011

Question: In one of your statements at the BRICS, you said about the shift of power to the common people, was it in the context of the ongoing international situation or the domestic context?

Answer: Well, I think there is both, a domestic...I think we have to take note of the fact that people's power is some thing which we have to reckon with, which is also happening internationally in the Middle East, in North Africa. I would not like to pronounce authoritatively that I have the answer on what went wrong in West Asia.

Source: MEA, New Delhi <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530317554>

11. External Affairs Minister Mr. S.M. Krishna's remarks at the release of India's National Security Annual Review 2010, New Delhi, 19 April 2011

India has to remain alert for responding to the developments in the Middle East and the Gulf, regions with which we have traditionally close ties. About 6 million Indians live and work there. The regions provide over two-thirds of our oil imports. Our effort is directed at ensuring safety of our nationals and securing our interests in the widest sense of the word.

Source: MEA, New Delhi <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530117561>

12. Welfare of Indian Workers in the Gulf Countries, Dhaka, 20 April 2011

Highlighting the initiatives taken by the Indian Government for the protection and welfare of Indian migrant workers, The Overseas Indian Affairs Minister, Mr. Vayalar Ravi said that an Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC) in New Delhi, equipped with a 24-hour toll-free helpline that provides information, and grievance redressal mechanisms to migrant workers and their families. The helpline operates in several regional languages of India besides international lines for callers from UAE. The Indian Government has also provided on-site support and information to its overseas workers, through the establishment of special centers in destination countries, a recent one having been established in Dubai called the Indian Workers Resource Centre. He said that the Indian Government, in cooperation with Government of UAE, is initiating a web-based attestation of contracts to be made mandatory for all workers, especially women care-givers and workers in the unskilled category. He further said that the Indian Community Welfare Fund in all our missions abroad have been established to provide on-site help and assistance on a means tested basis to overseas workers and migrants in distress. The Indian government has also entered into agreements, including social security agreements, with almost all major destination countries in the Gulf and Europe for the protection and welfare of our overseas workers.

Source: PIB, New Delhi <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=71706>

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