Mr. President,

At the outset, please allow me to express our appreciation for convening the discussion on the Question of Palestine at the General Assembly as we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Let me also express our appreciation for Ambassador Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. President,

India has long civilizational ties with the entire region of the Middle-East and a strong tradition of support for the Palestinian cause. We voted in support of the Resolution on the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict at the United Nations Human Rights Council and also at the United Nations General Assembly.

India believes that the conflict in West Asia is essentially political. It cannot be resolved by force. We favour a negotiated solution wherein a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine can live within secure and recognized borders, side by side at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap and UNSC Resolutions 1397 & 1515. This is also in line with our support for UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. We also participated at the Annapolis conference in 2007.

The Arab Peace Plan calls for withdrawal of Israel to pre-1967 borders, the recognition of Israel and the establishment of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. We have supported this plan.

India has also called for an end to Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory and major improvements at an early date on easing restrictions within Palestine of free movement of goods and persons.
Mr. President,

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. Towards this end, India has been doing what it can in extending development support to Palestine. In New Delhi, we have completed the Palestinian Chancery building as a gift from the Government of India and an enduring symbol of our solidarity with the people of Palestine.

Mindful of the deteriorating humanitarian situation, India contributed $1 million in response to United Nations Relief and Works Agency’s (UNRWA) Flash Appeals in the context of the conflict in Gaza in late 2008-early 2009. In this 60th anniversary year of the establishment of UNRWA, we have increased our contributions to the UNRWA.

We have furthermore contributed US$ 10 million as budget support to the Palestinian National Authority after the International Conference to Support the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza held in Sharm El-Sheikh in March 2009.

India has also participated at various donors conferences, including in Paris, Jakarta and Sharm El-Sheikh and has expeditiously implemented its pledges.

Mr. President,

Instability and violence coupled with humanitarian issues in Palestine have impacted upon the wider situation in the Middle East and beyond. There can be little doubt that the situation in Palestine remains a matter of grave concern to the international community and there is a need for all stakeholders to come together and create an environment for the earliest possible resumption of dialogue in the Middle East Peace Process.

Mr. President,

Our Prime Minister in his message on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People has reiterated that concerted and all round action is necessary to invigorate the peace process with the objective of achieving a durable, comprehensive and just settlement. We remain convinced that lasting peace in the region will contribute to global stability and prosperity.

Thank You.