

(c) whether Government is taking steps to garner support from various other countries in its claim to the membership for NSG;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN): (a) to (d) India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) continues to be under the consideration of the Group. India has received support from a large number of members of the NSG. As a non-member of the NSG, India is not privy to its internal discussions. However, it is gathered that procedural issues have been raised in the NSG in regard to consideration of India's application for the membership. The Government has continued to engage with members of the NSG, at the appropriate levels, for support for an early decision on India's membership by the Group.

(e) Does not arise.

Policy approach on Palestine

2096. SHRI D. RAJA:

SHRI BINOY VISWAM:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India voted in favour of Israel at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to deny a consultative status to a Palestinian non-governmental organization;

(b) if so, the details and reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Government is going against the national consensus in India supporting Palestine and trying to come closer to Government of Israel?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN): (a) and (b) 'Shahed', which is a Non- Government Organisation based in Lebanon, was given a Consultative Status by ECOSOC in January 2019. However, in the ECOSOC meeting held in June 2019, Israel submitted a proposal to ECOSOC for reconsidering this Consultative Status, claiming that the NGO has links with organizations banned in some countries for terror-links.

Since the issues regarding the NGO 'Shahed' required further enquiry, ECOSOC voted in favour of a proposal to refer the issue to its NGO Committee. India also voted in favour of this proposal primarily since this exercise is to ensure that individuals and entities with terrorist links and proscribed by the United Nations are prevented from entering into consultative status with ECOSOC.

Once this procedure is completed, the NGO Committee will publish a report, on which ECOSOC will take a final view on the matter.

(c) No. We continue to maintain our relationship with Palestine through regular high-level exchanges. We are also extending financial support for Palestinian nation building through capacity building, project assistance and budgetary support.

Rashtrapatiji paid a historic visit to Palestine in October 2015. During the visit, India extended financial assistance of USD 15 Million that included budgetary support of USD 5 Million. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi undertook a first ever visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Palestine on 10 February, 2018. During this visit, an amount of USD 42 Million worth of bilateral assistance to Palestine was extended, which is the highest ever single tranche of bilateral assistance to Palestine by India. PM Modi, during the visit, was conferred upon the "Grand Collar" of Palestine, which is the highest award of Palestine for foreign dignitaries.

Recently, India increased its contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) fund due to the ongoing financial crisis of UNRWA. The amount has been enhanced from previously 1.25 Million to USD 5 Million now, annually.

We have also increased the ICCR Scholarship from 25 to 50 per year and ITEC slots from 100 to 150 per year in order to support the higher education requirements of the Palestinian youth.

We also held the first ever Joint Commission Meeting between India and Palestine in Ramallah on November 8, 2016. We have been also expanding our relations bilaterally in several areas that include agriculture, IT, Youth and Sports, S&T and training.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas paid a State visit to India from 14 to 17 May 2017. During the visit, 5 MoUs on visa exemption for diplomatic passport holders, agriculture cooperation, cooperation in the field of IT and Electronics, health sector and cooperation in the field of youth affairs and sports were signed.