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ON THE
WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION

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Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

I

The past year, which marked the thirty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, has provided some reasons for celebration and many for anxiety. For example, the attainment of independence by Zimbabwe and the striking progress made by the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea are, in their different ways, sources of considerable satisfaction and encouragement. They show that with good will, hard work and understanding apparently insurmountable obstacles can be overcome through negotiation. On the other hand, we have witnessed at too many levels of international society a growing uncertainty and lack of direction. This is reflected in the deteriorating relationships of some of the more powerful nations, in the continuing deadlock on vital economic matters, in the persistence of certain regional conflicts to the detriment both of the peoples concerned and of the wider international community, in humanitarian disasters stemming from political and military conflict, and in an increasing incidence of politically motivated violence and terror.

In this confused climate the pursuit of many of the great objectives proclaimed in 1945 may seem to have lost momentum or to have been obscured, while some of the progress made in the last 30 years has been dissipated. A reliable system of international peace and security—the central theme of the Charter of the United Nations—has developed little further in practice than haphazard and last minute resorts to the United Nations. Disarmament, for all the meetings and mechanisms, seems a more distant goal than ever, and the world still lives in the shadow of nuclear destruction. The new international economic order remains little more than an abstraction, while the economic prospects of the vast majority of countries and peoples continue to be affected by the general disorder and malaise. Fundamental questions of human rights have been put aside or deadlocked by political and economic expediency. The development and observance of international law and a universally accepted code of international behaviour have sustained a series or reverses. These are the main challenges which we must address with determination and vision in the United Nations.

There is a general tendency to take progress for granted but loudly to bemoan the lack of it. We must therefore look at the other side of the 35-year balance sheet. The world, in spite of its burgeoning armaments, has so far escaped the scourge of another global war. The international community has come through the geopolitical revolution of decolonization with an unexpected minimum of violence and has embarked on a far more representative international political system. This system, despite the present insecurities, should in the long run have greater stability, justice and balance than the old system, which was polarized on the relations of a few great Powers. If this proves to be true, the United Nations, as the Organization in which the new system is taking shape, will have an increasing importance and relevance to international relations.

In this connexion a very important development has been the emergence, within the United Nations system, of regional and other groups of nations representing common interests and common views on important world problems. I believe that the emergence of these groups has been of great value to the United Nations both in articulating important policies and points of view and in facilitating and streamlining its work. This year we mourned the death of President Tito, a great statesman and one of the founders of the non-aligned movement. This movement has pioneered the progression to a more broadly based international system for the future. I believe that this will prove to have been a major historic step in the development of international relations.

Although unable to put an end to some regional conflicts, the United Nations has time and again shown its vital utility as a means of keeping some of them under control and preventing them from leading to a confrontation between global nuclear Powers. The present range of activity of the Organization, encompassing great economic and social aims, humanitarian programmes, human rights concerns and global problems of universal interest, is far wider and more comprehensive than anything envisaged at San Francisco.

His Holiness Pope John Paul II, whose visit to our Headquarters was a most inspiring event of the past year, expressed our common aspiration in the wish that "in view of its universal character, the United Nations will never cease to be the forum, the high tribune from which all man's problems are appraised in truth and justice".

We are, then, in a period in which certain fundamental improvements are accompanied by much strife and frustration. Since the United Nations represents a teeming world in transition, it is not surprising that the improvements and heightened opportunities, which we more or less take for granted, are offset by much disorder and perplexity. In the United Nations our task should be to try increasingly to tilt the balance in the right direction.

II

In this year, which has again witnessed alarming and unexpected international developments, it seems relevant to look once more at the concept of international peace and security which is the primary concern of the United Nations. Is this concept, as outlined in the Charter, still a valid aim to strive for? And if so, how do we proceed, in practical terms, to make the United Nations machinery more effective and more respected?

It is rightly a matter of general concern that the decisions of the Security Council and the resolutions of the General Assembly often go unheeded, so that problems which should have been brought under control persist, proliferate and pose continual threats to international peace. This failure also has a debilitating effect on the United Nations itself. Continued frustration breeds extremism, and extremism in its turn tends to breed irresponsibility and violence. Thus a reasonable decision disregarded may soon lead to a far sharper decision which tends to harden positions on all sides. This is a vicious circle which affects a number of important international problems. It is also a process which has much to do with the erosion of the authority and reputation of the United Nations as a responsible international body. We need to tackle both ends of this cycle—enhancing the authority of, and respect for, the main organs, and taking into account the need for a sense of realism in achieving results.

The United Nations was intended to provide a forum where injustices could be righted and international conflicts resolved. It was also intended to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations. While the Organization is often used effectively as a diplomatic centre for the resolution of problems, it is also frequently used as a parliamentary forum for actually waging a conflict in public. This process inevitably projects the Organization into controversial positions which have aroused considerable criticism in some quarters. There are complaints, for example, that such debates do not always take account of the realities of a situation and do not always allow for the relationship between voting strength and the possibility for practical implementation. Conversely, there have been countercharges that the will of the majority in the United Nations has too often been flouted and that the reasonable demands of its resolutions have been ignored.

It seems to me that both the diplomatic and the parliamentary approaches are important parts of our evolving world Organization. To bring both into a proper working balance, where each will support the effectiveness of the other, will require a much broader development of a sense of world community and of a basis of shared interests and responsibilities. We cannot expect such a sense of community to emerge overnight, but it is an essential goal if the Organization is to develop as its founders intended. At the present stage of evolution, desirable long-term international policies are all too often the victim of short-term domestic politics.

What is the real nature of the problem of international peace and security? Is our world fundamentally safe from an unforeseen and disastrous general conflict? Personally, I do not believe that we are on the brink of another world war, but there is certainly a great deal to worry about in the present unpredictable state of international relations. We cannot safely assume that the world situation is fundamentally stable.

After the Second World War the system of international peace and security envisaged in the Charter was based on the proposition that the nations of the world should entrust their security and the responsibility for maintaining international peace primarily to the Security Council of the United Nations. To take such a fundamental step requires a confidence both in each other and in the Council which the Governments of the world have not generally been able to muster. This has meant that the Council has too often played a peripheral role in important conflict situations or has tended to be used as a last resort when the situation was already seriously out of hand. This does not mean that the Council has not played a significant role. On the contrary, time and again it has provided the means to defuse a crisis and to point the way towards a solution.

Is this even remotely satisfactory, when compared with the system outlined in the Charter, which was designed after the experience of the most destructive war in history? The answer is that it is probably all that current political conditions will allow. We should be clear, however, that each time, for political reasons, limits are put on the capacity of the United Nations to act, each time the Organization is divided or vacillates in the face of actions which are clearly in violation of the Charter, and each time its decisions on important matters are ignored or treated with disrespect, the capacity and authority of the United Nations to deal with a future crisis is diminished.

I hope that all Governments will give this problem the most serious attention. It can become a matter literally of survival if, as has happened before, an unforeseen concatenation of events brings us face to face unexpectedly with an encompassing threat to world peace. We must remember that such a threat lies very near the surface of the arrangements which at present govern international politics.

III

Many important developments have claimed the attention of the United Nations in the past year. The problem of the Middle East has as usual been a dominant concern of the Organization, and in view of its special nature I shall deal with it separately.

The new and unexpected crisis which arose late in 1979 in Afghanistan raised fundamental problems of Charter principles. It has affected the process of détente, which had seemed to promise a more positive relationship between the world's most powerful States. It created tension and anxiety throughout the world community.

The United Nations was seized of this problem, and the General Assembly pronounced itself on the principles involved and the action required to resolve the crisis. A number of suggestions to this and related ends have been made both within and outside the United Nations, and various Governments, both individually and in groups, have made efforts to point the way to the solution of this formidable problem. These have included, in particular, moves on behalf of the Governments of the region, the Islamic Conference, the current Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the Council of Europe. Evidently any such solution needs the co-operation and consent of all the parties concerned, and must ensure that the Afghan people will be able to determine their own destiny, free from foreign interference and intervention.

For my part, I have exerted my best efforts to assist in the search for a solution. I discussed the situation with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of India and with the President and Foreign Minister of Pakistan on the occasion of my trip to New Delhi to attend the Third General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. During the following months I had the opportunity to continue these contacts and also to discuss the matter with the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan and the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. In addition I had talks with members of the Security Council, in particular the representatives of the Soviet Union and the United States. In all these talks, I expressed my concern about the dangerous situation in the area and the need for any early negotiated settlement. However, I have not yet been able to discern from these contacts a basis for an agreed solution. Therefore the only way that appears open is to initiate a process of negotiation among all the parties concerned with a view to finding a political solution of the problem with full regard to the principles of the Charter and the decisions of the Organization. This should be done in a manner that permits the national interests involved to be reconciled by peaceful means. Another, and tragic, aspect of this problem is the plight of the large number of Afghan refugees. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other concerned agencies have endeavoured to meet the essential humanitarian needs.

A completely unexpected development which has deeply preoccupied the United Nations and shaken international confidence has been the crisis in relations between the United States and Iran and the taking of the American diplomatic personnel in Iran as hostages. This was a unique event since the longstanding international conventions governing diplomatic relations and diplomatic immunity had hitherto been more or less taken for granted. Indeed, as recently as 1961 these international instruments were brought up to date under United Nations auspices in the Vienna Convention. This episode, which, to my deep regret, is still continuing, underlines the absolute necessity of preserving codes of conduct in the essential relations between nations. If we lose this basic minimum we face a future of international chaos.

The Security Council and the International Court of Justice have pronounced themselves firmly and unanimously on the essential principles involved in the hostage question. I myself have been closely involved from the outset in efforts to free the hostages and to settle the very serious crisis in relations between Iran and the United States, as well as to find some means of recognizing the sufferings of the Iranian people and of dealing with their strongly held perception of their historic grievances. I have been to Teheran myself, as has a Commission of Inquiry which stands ready to resume its work whenever this may appear to be useful and opportune. I have remained in constant contact with the Iranian authorities and the Government of the United States. The fate of the hostages demands the most careful and imaginative handling. For my part I shall continue to exert my best efforts to bring about a satisfactory solution to this grave problem in all its aspects.

In Africa many developments give cause for serious concern. But in a world of unresolved problems the emergence of the independent nation of Zimbabwe stands out as a shining example of statesmanship. The fact that it was possible, after a prolonged conflict, to work out a solid political basis for the self-determination of a people while assuring the harmonious coexistence of different races is a triumph for leadership, moderation and the capacity to learn from past mistakes. Tenacity in the struggle for a people's inalienable rights led to a settlement in which magnanimity, understanding and tolerance were the order of the day. This was an inspiring moment in human history, no matter what difficulties and challenges the new Government of Zimbabwe is now so courageously facing. These developments owe much to the wisdom and statesmanship of many very different people, in particular the leaders of the Zimbabwe liberation movements, the African front-line States, the British Government and the Commonwealth. The role in this historic process of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, which kept alive the objective of genuine independence and majority rule, was an indispensable factor in the ultimately successful outcome.

Important discussions have already been initiated concerning United Nations assistance to Zimbabwe in its challenging task of national reconstruction. The Security Council has recognized that this is an international responsibility, and I shall do my best to mobilize all possible assistance. I hope that bilateral aid will also be forthcoming in generous measure to assist the Government of Prime Minister Mugabe in dealing with the tremendous problems of reconstruction.

The events in Zimbabwe are an object lesson in escaping from the past in order to win the future. As well as marking a turning-point in southern Africa, this development will also, I hope, be studied in other parts of the world where historic problems block the way to a peaceful future of peoples in coexistence.

It is to be hoped that the Zimbabwe development will be followed by corresponding progress in Namibia. For the moment, however, to my regret, the implementation of the settlement proposal approved by the Security Council is still pending. In the past year intensive efforts have been made through negotiations and representations of various kinds to break the deadlock, and the concept of a demilitarized zone along Namibia's frontier with Angola and Zambia has been accepted by all concerned, including South Africa. I wish to express my appreciation to all those who have been helpful in facilitating our efforts to break the deadlock. I sincerely hope that these efforts will come to fruition in the very near future.

Quite apart from the existing embitterment and frustration, I am concerned that a further delay in solving this question may lead to wider destruction and bloodshed on both sides of the frontier. In a matter of such importance one party or another may well have doubts about taking a historic step forward, for such a step inevitably involves a considerable element of chance. But I

am convinced that the alternative is bound to lead to a steady erosion of the situation, an escalation of violence and a bitter long-drawn-out struggle which will profit no one and bring bloodshed and ruin to the region. The prospect of a coexistent future in which problems are solved in co-operation rather than by conflict will be indefinitely postponed, and all parties in the end will be the losers. The tide of history is flowing strong in Africa. Many of the lessons of the immediate past have been learned and the result is a mood of statesmanship and pragmatism. I believe that the climate for transition to Namibian independence has never been more favourable than now. I therefore urge all concerned to take advantage of it and move forward expeditiously to the implementation of the settlement proposal contained in Security Council resolution 435 (1978). In the Secretariat we are fully prepared to play our part in ensuring the fair and objective implementation of this plan.

While the problem of Namibia is an immediate preoccupation, the general concern over the system of racial discrimination and *apartheid* in South Africa has been heightened in recent months by increasing tensions and violent incidents in South Africa. I need only repeat here that this concern will inevitably persist until there are significant signs that the system of *apartheid* with all that it represents is a thing of the past. No reasonable person can underestimate the magnitude of the problem. But by the same token the world community's concern will continue and grow as long as the manifest injustices of *apartheid* persist.

Elsewhere in Africa there are serious inter-State and other conflicts as well as enormous internal problems. The tragic civil war in Chad, the unresolved problems of the Horn of Africa and the prolonged conflict of Western Sahara all call for urgent action by the international community, and more importantly by the parties directly involved, to restore conditions of peace and understanding.

I certainly hope that the painstaking efforts of the Organization of African Unity to resolve these problems will succeed. I am in close contact with African leaders on these matters and have assured them of the support of the United Nations in their efforts.

In the case of Chad, I hope that the intensive efforts being undertaken by OAU to reconcile the warring parties will prove fruitful. Otherwise, it is possible that a request will be made to the United Nations for assistance in a peace-keeping operation.

In the Horn of Africa, I was pleased to learn that relations between the Sudan and Ethiopia had taken a positive turn and that OAU has resumed its good offices in resolving differences between Ethiopia and Somalia.

The question of Western Sahara, with which the United Nations is seized, has entered a critical phase. The OAU has actively sought a solution to the problem and a report on the latest situation will be submitted to the General Assembly.

The United Nations has a profound interest in such situations, not only because of their potential bearing on the wider peace, but also because its assistance is often necessary to deal with massive humanitarian disasters which result from military and political conflict. I hope therefore that, in close co-operation with OAU, efforts can be intensified in the coming year to bring these flash-points of the African scene under control. I shall have more to say later on international assistance in the humanitarian field.

The Middle East and Cyprus remain direct concerns of the United Nations in the peace-keeping field as well as in the broader dimension of political settlement. In Cyprus, while the actual situation in the island remains calm, not least because of the presence of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), the peace-making process has been deadlocked for over a year in spite of the high-level 10-point agreement reached under my auspices in May 1979. The year has therefore been spent in trying to clarify the assumptions on which substantive intercommunal talks could proceed. On 9 August 1980 the talks were finally resumed and agreement was reached to proceed to the substantive stage in mid-September. Here again the will of the parties to engage in a significant process of negotiation and compromise will be the key to any future success. A sustained international effort, at many levels and in many forms, has been made to assist them in their task. That effort will continue.

I wish to take this opportunity to express appreciation to the Governments which have provided troops and other forms of support for UNFICYP.

The situation in South-East Asia has remained dangerous and is of the deepest concern to me. Despite efforts made at various levels, little progress has been achieved in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 34/22 regarding the situation in Kampuchea, including the withdrawal of foreign troops and the search for a political solution. Persistent political and military problems have rendered extremely difficult the vast humanitarian relief operation being undertaken by the United Nations system on behalf of the afflicted people of Kampuchea. I have been mindful, since its adoption by the Assembly, of the resolution requesting me to exercise my good offices in order to contribute to a peaceful solution of the problems in the area. Following consultations with the parties, I travelled to Hanoi and Bangkok in August 1980. I discussed these problems in both capitals, and despite the conflicting views it was agreed that the process of discussion would continue with my assistance when the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam and Thailand are in New York to attend the forthcoming session of the General Assembly. I have made it clear that my good offices continue to be available to the countries of the region for any purpose that they may find useful. In the meantime, until solutions are found to resolve the political and military issues that underlie the crisis in the area, the humanitarian operations of the United Nations system have to continue as effectively as possible despite the serious limits imposed upon them by the prevailing situation. In this connexion, I should like to recall that all aspects of the relief programme were considered in a meeting that I convened at Geneva in May 1980, at the request of the Economic and Social Council.

I shall be commenting later on the search for a settlement in the Middle East. Here, therefore, I shall men-

tion only the peace-keeping involvement of the United Nations in that region. The two main forces involved are the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on the Golan Heights and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in south Lebanon. The military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) assist both of these operations while carrying out their other duties. Once again this year the UNTSO observers have displayed outstanding courage, efficiency and devotion to duty. UNDOF has continued to carry out its duties most effectively and without incident. UNIFIL, as I have pointed out before, is involved in a far less clearly defined and much more complex situation. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Force has continued to face major problems and to experience extremely disturbed conditions.

I do not wish to repeat here the substance of my very detailed reports on UNIFIL to the Security Council. We continue to face in south Lebanon a situation in which it has so far proved impossible for UNIFIL to achieve all the objectives of its mandate. In particular, it has been prevented from taking full control of its entire area of operations, from establishing peaceful conditions and from helping to restore the full authority and sovereignty of the Lebanese Government in that area. A main factor in this situation is the policy of the Government of Israel and its support of the *de facto* forces in southern Lebanon. The disturbed conditions in other parts of southern Lebanon, including the presence of Palestinian and other armed elements, and the general political and security situation in Lebanon itself also contribute to the extremely difficult conditions in the south.

Whatever its frustrations, I believe that all concerned agree that UNIFIL is fulfilling with great courage and restraint an absolutely vital peace-keeping function, not only in south Lebanon but in regard to the Middle East situation as a whole. We shall persevere, in co-operation with the Government of Lebanon, in pursuing all the objectives of UNIFIL, in strengthening its capacity to discharge its functions by peaceful means, and in making all possible efforts to secure those changes which are necessary to the successful fulfilment of UNIFIL's task. I wish here to pay a heartfelt tribute to the Commander, officers, men and civilian staff of UNIFIL for their steadfastness in adversity and danger. I also wish to thank those Governments which have provided contingents for the confidence and understanding they have shown in supporting this vital but difficult operation. And I wish here to honour the memory of those United Nations soldiers who have given their lives in south Lebanon in the cause of peace.

In this connexion, I feel obliged to express once again my concern at the financial difficulties which two important peace-keeping operations, UNIFIL and UNFICYP, continue to confront. This situation places a heavy burden on the troop-contributing countries which, if allowed to continue, may adversely affect the future of such operations. It also involves a matter of basic principle, since the maintenance of international peace and security under the Security Council should be a collective responsibility.

IV

The Middle East situation continues to dominate the affairs of the international community and remains central to the political and economic stability of the world. Few other international problems have such a complex structure or such widespread repercussions. I am deeply concerned at the present trend of events, in which extremism feeds extremism, where claims foster counterclaims or reactions, and where the short-term demands of national politics tend to obscure the long-term demands of justice, peace and humanity. I do not intend to deal here with specific cases in this regard with which the Security Council has been concerned and on which it has taken decisions in the past year.

In the current circumstances, there are severe limitations to what the United Nations can do to maintain a reasonable degree of peace and to promote progress towards a settlement. Indeed it is significant and ominous that the United Nations itself is increasingly under attack in some quarters, and that at times its good faith is impugned. This is a serious development, because the United Nations should be in a position at all times to play a useful and constructive role in the search for a comprehensive solution. Indeed there are some indispensable functions—peace-keeping for example—which it is uniquely qualified to perform. It is vital therefore that the United Nations should uphold the essential principles and the rights of the parties involved and, in doing so, should be able to command the confidence of all. This is an extremely difficult role to play effectively. And yet without it an essential element will be missing when we come, as we must, to move forward towards a settlement.

We have to realize that there is not, and cannot be, an instant solution to the Middle East problem which will be immediately acclaimed by all. This is particularly so because the problem is compounded of a long series of historical developments, errors, injustices and conflicts. I am moved to make this statement by my concern at the present state of affairs—a state of affairs, incidentally, which casts a shadow over many other important activities of the community of nations.

Any progress in the Middle East requires in the first place a vastly improved degree of communication and understanding at many levels. There can be no hope of peaceful progress if the peoples of the region and their leaders do not recognize and accept each other's existence and each other's right to exist. Conditions must be created in which positive and agreed solutions can be developed.

The main aspects of the Middle East problem are interdependent and cannot be separated. A continuous and determined effort must therefore be made to achieve a comprehensive settlement through negotiations involving all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Any future solution of the problem will have to be based on the right of all States in the area to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force, on the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, including their right to self-determination, and on withdrawal from occupied territories. In this

context the question of Jerusalem is of primary importance and cannot be solved through any unilateral decision.

I continue to believe that the United Nations can do much to facilitate a settlement, and I earnestly hope that it will play an increasingly important role in this vital endeavour.

V

In my report of 1978 on the work of the Organization I referred to the achievements of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, devoted to disarmament, which had just completed its work. Unfortunately, the disarmament strategy adopted at the special session, which might have become a landmark in the quest for a reduction of the burden of arms, has yet to be translated into substantive action and has been followed instead by a further escalation of the arms race. Available figures on military expenditures already indicate another big upward jump, attributable in large measure to the deteriorating trend of the general international situation. World military expenditures in 1980 will exceed the staggering figure of $500 billion, or roughly 6 per cent of total world output. The quantitative and qualitative development of weapons, particularly nuclear weapons, continues. The impact of such expenditures on other critical basic needs of society is self-evident, and I have referred repeatedly in the past to the link between disarmament and development as being of critical importance.

Present trends cast ominous shadows over disarmament efforts, both within and outside the framework of the United Nations. Indeed, disarmament activities seem to remain largely confined to organizational and procedural matters rather than substantive ones. In view of the scope and intensity of the efforts that went into the successful elaboration of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, it seems necessary to examine carefully the assumptions that underlay that exercise and the factors involved in the subsequent frustration of the hopes placed in it. It is after all an abiding irony that all Governments are aware of the dimensions, the significance and the dangers of the arms race and are committed in principle to disarmament, and yet we see less actual progress in this field than in almost any other major international problem.

It is important to define and recognize the realities of the situation. The very Governments which in principle strongly favour disarmament and arms control as a general proposition will, when faced with perceived concrete dangers, tend to give priority to military strength in order to enhance their security. While it is widely acknowledged that disarmament will improve the security of all in the long run, few are prepared to rely on it as a protection against their perception of today's threats or tomorrow's dangers. Faced with this choice, most Governments for the time being consider it their duty to opt for the dictates of immediate safety through armaments.

This is the dilemma which perpetuates the arms race. The evolution of the international situation since the special session on disarmament convened in May 1978 has tended to sharpen this dilemma. Almost every one of the areas of current tension and conflict, some of which are mentioned in other sections of this report, generates security problems for the parties concerned and almost every one of them adds further momentum to the arms race. The lessons of history indicate that enduring peace and security cannot in the long run be built on the accumulation of weaponry by individual States or by military alliances. But history also demonstrates that, in the face of threats to or breaches of peace, States will exercise their right of individual and collective self-defence as best they can. It is true that the balance of deterrence is essentially fraught with risk, but many Governments, not only those of nuclear-weapon States, would consider that in the present circumstances world peace would be endangered if that balance were destabilized. And yet it is all too clear that the steady increase in weapons, especially nuclear weapons, exposes the world to terrible potential dangers. The comprehensive study on nuclear weapons called for two years ago by the General Assembly, and recently completed, highlights such dangers. In 13 years the total number of strategic nuclear warheads has reportedly almost tripled. The report emphasizes the deficiencies and risks of current deterrence strategies and the threatening prospects of further nuclear proliferation.

In effect, while the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session laid down the basis for an effective approach for disarmament, disarmament cannot be conceived in a vacuum. There is an intimate relationship between disarmament and security, and the nature of the relations among countries obviously affects their willingness to perceive security in other than military terms. Progress in disarmament will increase confidence among nations. But progress is likely to be modest until that confidence has been developed, at least to some extent, and until at least some of the causes of distrust and rivalry are dealt with. Thus, if we believe that disarmament is essential, we must also strengthen the belief that only through compromise, restraint and the harmonization of national goals can lasting and genuine international security be achieved. In short, we must make a determined effort to return to the purposes and principles of the Charter.

In these circumstances, we should recognize that it is essential to keep the consideration of the disarmament problem closely tied to specific political realities and to the ways in which Governments actually respond to those realities. This applies both to disarmament proper and to the closely related area of arms control.

There must be tangible demonstrations of renewed commitment to the objectives outlined in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session. The Second Disarmament Decade, which began this year, offers a suitable framework for setting politically attainable concrete targets and making substantive progress in that direction.

The role of the negotiating body is particularly important in this regard. It is the Committee on Disarmament which has been entrusted with the important task of giving practical effect to the Programme of Action. The Committee now has a clear-cut agenda and has also established a number of working groups to facilitate its

consideration of various issues on its agenda. What is needed now is a vigorous pursuit of negotiations leading to substantive agreements.

There is one area in particular where agreement is not only urgent but possible. In transmitting to the Committee on Disarmament the study on a comprehensive nuclear-test ban, I reiterated my conviction that "all the technical and scientific aspects of the problem had been so fully explored that only a political decision was necessary in order to achieve agreement". The problem can and should be solved now.

While Member States have a responsibility for maintaining the process of halting and reversing the arms race, the United Nations can play an important role also in providing objective and authoritative information on the arms race, disarmament and arms control. By disseminating such information, world-wide public support for disarmament can be generated, including support for the efforts of Governments on this most difficult of all problems.

The second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, to be convened in 1982, will provide a new opportunity to assess the processes initiated through the international disarmament strategy adopted at the tenth special session.

VI

Political and military conflicts and upheavals invariably engender human suffering which, on occasion, reaches disaster proportions. We have all too many such cases today. Problems of refugees and displaced persons as well as demands for relief and rehabilitation on a massive scale exist in Africa and Asia. Similar problems exist on a lesser scale in Latin America. Considerable strain is imposed on the fragile economies of countries that receive large numbers of refugees, and they naturally expect the international community to share the burden they carry.

In addition, international assistance is required to deal with the ravages of drought and famine which have spread from the Sahelian countries to many other countries in Africa, leaving in their wake starvation and social disruption.

To deal with such situations, the United Nations has long-standing humanitarian programmes and agencies. The efforts of the United Nations system to meet specific humanitarian challenges are being reported in full elsewhere, and I wish here only to make some general comments and suggestions on this essential part of the Organization's work.

Political and humanitarian factors are sometimes difficult to separate in some of the situations I have mentioned. Unfortunately most of the great human tragedies of our time are deeply rooted in political and military developments. This is particularly true of the various humanitarian demands of Indo-China. In the face of human misery on the scale which exists in that part of the world, it is essential to provide humanitarian assistance even though a political solution has yet to be found. I appeal to all Governments to understand this dilemma and to support the humanitarian efforts of the United Nations system and associated international and voluntary organizations to provide assistance on a non-discriminatory basis to the afflicted civilian population. Above all, there is a need to make renewed efforts to move in the direction of political settlements which will allow the agonized populations of that tortured region to look at last to a future of peace.

My second comment concerns the question of security. It has until now been generally accepted that security and peace-keeping are political matters and separate from emergency humanitarian efforts, although past experience has shown that when the two have happened to coincide the humanitarian task has been greatly facilitated by the presence of peace-keeping operations. A relatively small United Nations presence can have a calming effect on a violent situation out of all proportion to its numbers, armaments or military capacity. I fully recognize the political and other complexities involved. Clearly the authority of the Security Council must be respected, and the principle of national sovereignty strictly observed. On this basis, I believe however that Member States might consider the possibilities of extending in some form the Organization's very considerable experience of peace-keeping into humanitarian emergencies where conditions call urgently for an element of security.

My third comment relates to the United Nations system itself and humanitarian emergencies. The United Nations and the specialized agencies were not, in themselves, originally conceived as bodies which would conduct large-scale operations. The operations which they have increasingly undertaken have therefore necessarily been improvised. This is all very well up to a point, but after 35 years it is abundantly clear that the Organization is going to continue to be faced with practical emergencies, sometimes on a very large scale, where as a matter of human necessity and conscience it has to act and where the circumstances urgently require that the United Nations provide the leadership that is necessary to avert unspeakable tragedy.

It is simply insufficient on such occasions to cobble together for such vast emergencies an improvised coalition of independent United Nations agencies and programmes, sometimes in co-operation with the Red Cross and with a number of non-governmental organizations and voluntary agencies. All are willing to help, and many contribute magnificently, but organization, co-ordination, united policies and co-operative forward planning alone can ensure full success and the optimum use of the assistance provided by the international community.

I shall be pursuing this matter within the United Nations system and in the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. I would naturally welcome the views of Member States, especially those which have so generously supported these humanitarian efforts. In this connexion I welcome the initiative taken this summer in the Economic and Social Council and the proposal for a review of the emergency operations of the United Nations system. I feel that it is time to take a further step in making our Organization better fitted to meet the challenges of the present and the future.

I wish here to mention a long-standing humanitarian programme, the United Nations Relief and Works

Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which reached its thirtieth anniversary this year. The question of the renewal of UNRWA is on the provisional agenda of the forthcoming session of the General Assembly. Every year UNRWA goes through a financial crisis which absorbs a very large proportion of the Commissioner-General's time and energy. As long as the Palestine refugee problem exists, UNRWA makes an essential contribution, not only in discharging a humanitarian obligation of the United Nations but as an important stabilizing factor in the region. Every year financial shortfalls threaten drastic cuts in UNRWA's services, especially in the education system, and the outlook for next year is even more serious.

VII

Earlier in this report I mentioned the necessity of observing binding codes of conduct in the essential relations between nations. Interference, often by violent means, in the internal affairs of sovereign States has for far too long been a deplorable feature of the international scene. The past year has in addition witnessed a dangerous increase of violence directed at diplomatic and political persons both at home and abroad. There have been kidnappings, threats and assassinations.

I am deeply disturbed at such trends, indicating, as they do, anarchic tendencies which can only erode the already tenuous structure of international relations. Such activities reveal both a contempt for international rules, conventions and practices and a disrespect for the domestic peace and order of other States. They can only cause universal concern among the vast majority of States which are striving for a peaceful and less violent future. As Secretary-General, with my direct responsibility for international civil servants all over the world, I am also profoundly disturbed by a trend which can very seriously affect the security and effectiveness of the international civil service.

The General Assembly has, on my initiative, previously had occasion to consider the broader problem of international terrorism and its underlying causes. I now welcome the proposal for the inclusion of a new item in the Assembly's agenda concerning effective measures to enhance the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives. I hope that the Assembly will take advantage of this proposal to make abundantly clear the concern of Member States with preserving and enhancing the respect for and security of those engaged in international affairs as well as the need for an end to the present violent trend, which can only have the most dangerous consequences for the entire world community.

VIII

Throughout the past year, I have on numerous occasions expressed my concern about current trends in the world economy. These trends have caused and continue to cause widespread uncertainty and have assumed special gravity in their impact on the weakest and most vulnerable countries. It is clear that urgent responses are required from the international community and that such responses must be based on greater understanding and co-operation. It is imperative that the political will of nations be mobilized, at the highest levels of government, if we are to accelerate the processes of negotiation and compromise which are required to reverse present trends and to transform and restructure the international economy.

In these circumstances, during the contacts that I had with numerous world leaders in the past months and in the visits that I paid to various capitals, I invariably expressed my deep anxiety at the present pace of negotiations and explored ways and means to proceed with a greater sense of cohesion and urgency.

Certain positive steps have been taken over the past few months, notably in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, where negotiations have led to the establishment of a Common Fund and a set of rules and principles regarding restrictive business practices. Further, actions have been taken by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in an attempt to alleviate the balance-of-payments problems of developing countries. However, in the critical areas of energy, money and development finance, no significant progress has been achieved, and initiatives that were undertaken have proved inadequate. Even the preparations for the eleventh special session of the General Assembly, devoted to development and international economic co-operation, proved to be difficult.

We are therefore entering a new decade burdened with unresolved problems, with insufficient agreement on how to address these problems. It is the aim of the new international development strategy for the third United Nations development decade, discussed by the General Assembly at its eleventh special session, to provide a common perspective and to indicate the goals, objectives and policy measures required of the international community as a whole if we are to accelerate the development of developing countries. The strategy provides a measure of the massive effort that will be required both domestically, and at the international level, if worthwhile progress is to be achieved. Unless challenges are boldly met, these objectives will remain in danger of staying unfulfilled, as were many elements of the previous strategy. I need hardly elaborate on the ominous consequences that any such shortcoming would imply for the 6 billion people who will inhabit this planet by the year 2000.

It is thus essential that the proposed global negotiations in critical areas relating to raw materials, energy, trade, development, money and finance should be given a serious new impetus in the coming months. I hope that the convergence in concerns and the expressions of the determination to act that emerged from many of the statements to the General Assembly at its eleventh special session would serve to accelerate the now dangerously modest pace of discussions in the North-South negotiations. A large majority of countries strongly support the view that this new round will contribute to the solution of international problems and be instrumental in restructuring international economic relations. However, discussions on the agenda and procedures for the new round have underlined that there are still serious divergences concerning the manner in which negotiations should proceed. The final outcome of the special

session will indicate whether, beyond general statements of intent, there is a real determination to engage in substantive negotiations.

It is my earnest hope that these answers will indeed be found at the earliest moment so that the process of global negotiations can move forward. Even then, the process, if it is to succeed, must be backed continuously by the serious political will of all the parties involved. To this end, and in order to stimulate current efforts, it may prove useful to hold short meetings at the ministerial level at crucial stages of the negotiations. Likewise, the Brandt Commission has suggested the holding of summit meetings of limited numbers of heads of State or Government. This suggestion deserves careful attention.

As I noted in addressing the Economic and Social Council, the time-frame required for fruitful global negotiations must not deter us from seeking immediate remedies to urgent problems. Thus, the critical situation of certain developing countries may deteriorate drastically during the coming months unless prompt and appropriate action is taken. It was in this connexion that I drew the attention of Governments to the balance-of-payments difficulties being experienced by many developing countries, including especially the least developed and others of low income. I made a number of proposals on how to deal with these difficulties and also urged that the pace of investment in the energy sector of these countries should be accelerated. I have noted that the response to these proposals has been encouraging; I would hope that they will be considered more fully during the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly and that appropriate actions will be initiated to remedy the situation.

As we view the current stage of our negotiations on economic matters, we cannot afford to delude ourselves with the thought that paralysis in the economic sector will not entail serious political consequences. The interaction between economic and political factors is constant and intense. Peace is as much at stake in the discussions on economic questions as prosperity and a decent standard of living for all humanity. Inevitably, in these circumstances, economic issues will play an increasing role in the life of the United Nations in answer to the concerns of Member States. I intend to ensure that the United Nations system does its utmost to meet these concerns with a sense of purpose and determination.

IX

Our Organization remains central to humanity's aspirations for a world in which human rights and the dignity of the human person are respected. While a number of positive steps have been taken in this field in the past year, particularly as a result of recent initiatives in the Commission on Human Rights, there have also, unfortunately, been a great number of human rights violations in the international community. These violations, which include arbitrary detention, torture, hostage-taking and forced migrations, remain the cause for deep concern and anguish. A most distressing and continuing phenomenon has been the summary execution of individuals in many parts of the world without regard for the due process of law. I have condemned these acts on humanitarian grounds and will continue to do so in unequivocal terms.

Moreover, senseless violence and wanton assaults on human dignity in the past year have created fresh challenges, not only for the United Nations but for all organizations and individuals involved in the promotion of human rights.

I have repeatedly said that the hopes placed in the United Nations in the field of human rights can only be realized if the Governments which make up the Organization comply with the principles of the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Too often we see a wide gap between principles and actual practice. This results in frustration within the Organization and disillusionment among the public at large.

The proceedings of the last session of the Commission on Human Rights were among this year's more positive developments and pointed the way to a serious approach to a number of difficult matters. Despite the political climate prevailing, the Commission made advances in the elaboration of standards on various subjects such as the rights of the child, the rights of minorities, the prohibition of torture, and the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance. Moreover, the Commission addressed itself specifically to situations of gross violations of human rights. The establishment by the Commission of a working group to investigate the fate of missing and disappeared persons was indicative of its deep concern with regard to this tragic problem. The Working Group has since met and is seeking the cooperation of all concerned for the purpose of eventually bringing an end to the problem of enforced or involuntary disappearances and of determining the whereabouts or fate of missing or disappeared persons. Quiet and effective work, through a series of seminars and studies, was also undertaken in the course of the year to give wider understanding to the purposes of the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

Such measures, each in itself seemingly a small step, represent in the aggregate a serious effort to build up the machinery and procedures necessary to make a reality of the objectives of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We should be very clear, however, that our efforts hitherto are small indeed in comparison to the awesome magnitude of this problem. Nor must we forget that the human rights of the Universal Declaration, if they are to have meaning to millions around the globe, must be related to the right to development and to the creation of a new international economic order. There can be scant comfort in the contemplation of abstract rights while poverty and disease afflict vast numbers in this world.

In these circumstances, I would appeal to States which have not yet done so to accede as speedily as possible to instruments such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocol thereto, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

I have always regarded it as my duty to exercise my good offices in human rights matters and I shall con-

tinue to assist in every way that I can. Increasingly I have been requested by various United Nations bodies dealing with human rights to enter into direct contacts with Governments of countries facing problems. In several instances, such Governments have received visits from special representatives designated by me. I appreciate such co-operation, which furthers a purpose that is central to our Organization and the values we profess.

X

The World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, held at Copenhagen, which marked the mid-point of the Decade declared by the General Assembly in 1976, thoroughly considered the totality of issues relating to women. The Conference and its attendant activities vividly demonstrated the vastly increased understanding of these fundamental problems and the rightful degree of importance which is now at last being given to them. The Conference showed dramatically that women fully intend to play a more active role in determining, at the national and international levels, their own destinies as well as sharing in key decisions in matters of peace and development.

The Conference stressed the need for the redistribution of tasks and responsibilities among men and women so that the division of labour between the sexes both within and outside the household is more equally shared. It highlighted the undoubted fact that mass poverty is a primary cause of the inequality of women and that their advancement is therefore closely linked with the goals of development and of the new international economic order. It emphasized the undoubted fact that women are not simply discriminated against by the productive system but carry a double responsibility as the reproductive force of our society.

The Conference articulated clearly the determination of women to share more fully in the process of global management for development and for peace as well as their conviction of the need for the allocation of a greater share of the world's resources to the betterment of the lives of all people rather than to the instruments of war. In this context, it underscored the important place both of women's potential and their concerns in the formulation of a new international development strategy.

The political controversy over certain aspects of the Programme of Action should not be allowed to overshadow the great range, importance and imaginativeness of the deliberations in Copenhagen. The Conference served progressively to advance and deepen the realization of the world community that women are actively involved in every global concern. I hope and believe that this recognition will increasingly become a powerful force for positive change and peaceful development.

XI

The Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea completed its ninth session at the end of August with a successful conclusion definitely in sight, and it seems likely that a convention can be adopted early in 1981. This monumental negotiation to draft a constitution for the seas has been called, with good reason, one of the most significant achievements in international relations since the United Nations Charter.

The more than 300 articles and eight annexes of the informal text that contains the draft convention, dealing as they do with almost every conceivable aspect of the uses and resources of the oceans, are the result of tireless negotiation and the process of consensus. The compromises reached have their roots in common interests and in the reconciliation of competing interests rather than in ideology, and signal a striking victory for the rule of reason and law. In fact the Conference on the Law of the Sea disposes of the idea that the United Nations cannot be used as an effective negotiating body and that it is impossible to negotiate on complex matters in large groups of Governments.

At the recent session acceptable formulations were found on the remaining hard-core issues. The work which remains outstanding could be completed at the next and last session of the Conference. It is confidently hoped that a convention would be ready for adoption by April 1981. This would bring to fruition one of the most arduous and complex negotiations ever undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations, or perhaps in human history.

Quite apart from the achievement of the specific objectives of the Conference on the Law of the Sea, I attach the highest importance to the impact which its success may have in strengthening the role of the United Nations in finding viable solutions to great global issues. I hope that those who labour in other fields will take courage from this remarkable example.

XII

In my last report on the work of the Organization, I stated that the international civil service was at a critical juncture and that there was an urgent need to re-evaluate positions and attitudes in this regard in the full knowledge that there are differing views on the matter. That assessment remains unchanged.

This is a time of increasing interest in the personnel questions of the Organization on the part both of Member States and of staff members themselves. Equitable geographical distribution of the Secretariat, the desirability of establishing and maintaining a more rational recruitment policy, the career prospects of staff as well as the status and security of the members of the international civil service are vital matters that have engaged the attention of Member States and staff alike. We must spare no efforts to tackle effectively these crucial issues, if we are to reaffirm and revitalize the original concept of an independent international civil service outlined so cogently in Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter.

There is a wide range of diversity of attitudes among Member States and staff members on many of the practical problems of the Secretariat. This year, for example, the resolution of the General Assembly requesting reports on the possibility for change in the existing criteria has given rise to serious differences between the major financial contributors and other Member States

concerning the desirable ranges for geographical distribution of posts in the Secretariat.

The question of the international civil service is an extremely complex one, since there are constraints and practical limitations which severely curtail the possibilities of meeting all points of view. Thus a perfect solution is, in the nature of things, impossible. We must therefore strive to achieve common ground through understanding and mutual accommodation where all sides are willing to appreciate the interests of others and to co-operate in the relief of legitimate concerns. A great deal of patience will be required.

As far as the Secretary-General is concerned, he needs such guidance from Member States as will permit him to exercise fully the proper discretion necessary in the matter of appointments so that the Organization will always have the staff it requires to carry out its functions effectively. The legitimate interests of the staff itself must also be borne in mind at all times not only by the Secretary-General but also by the Member Governments. In this connexion I wish to express my concern about the security of international civil servants and about the imperative need for Member States to comply with their obligations under the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations.

We now have a wealth of experience on the problems and functioning of the international civil service. I believe that we need a frank and open evaluation of personnel matters and of the concept of the international civil service in the light of this experience and in the full knowledge of the existence of widely divergent views. I am confident that, in the right spirit, we can find the accommodations and arrangements necessary to preserve the essential nature of the international civil service and to secure for the Organization the best efforts from its staff in their dedicated service to the world community.

XIII

In recent years, much attention has been devoted to the rationalization of the structures and procedures of the Organization both at the intergovernmental and Secretariat level. Some progress has been achieved at both levels. But important as it is to rationalize structures and procedures, it should be emphasized that these are not aims in themselves but rather the means for supporting the substantive work of the Organization, the programmes, facilities and services it produces for the benefit of Member States and the international community at large. It is, therefore, no less important to rationalize these substantive activities and to ensure that their orientation, content and delivery are timely and relevant to the priority needs of Member States and of the international community. Here we have so far failed to make satisfactory progress.

In an Organization as vast and complex as the United Nations—with a $1.2 billion biennial budget, a programme composed of some 2,000 individual elements or major projects, some 50 programme-formulating intergovernmental organs with powers to adopt decisions demanding action from the Secretariat, and with major units located in different parts of the world—this is no simple task. It is nevertheless an urgent one at a time when we are faced with the dilemma of reconciling the need to meet new demands on the Organization with the need for budgetary restraint. As the scope for real growth in the budget of the Organization is severely limited, the only possibility for meeting demands for new activities is to analyse closely the programmes for elements which can be scaled down or abandoned because their relative priority is lower than that of the proposed new programmes. This would entail a rigorous examination of priorities among programmes and procedures for rethinking the allocation of resources to them.

As part of this process there are a number of actions which will greatly assist in this endeavour. These include the medium-term plan, which more systematically involves intergovernmental organs in the review process; the programme budget, which gives increased emphasis to programme aspects particularly in the economic and social sectors; and an evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of United Nations programmes which will enable the Organization to draw more systematically on its own experience and help it to concentrate on approaches and methods which have proved most effective.

Such measures are essential for the identification of activities that are of marginal usefulness or obsolete. Obviously the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization cannot be radically improved solely by actions initiated within the Secretariat. The other essential is the active participation of Governments and their readiness to take the necessary hard decisions to terminate marginally useful activities.

I have commented in previous reports on the relentless increase in the number of international meetings each year. I know that my concern on this score is shared by a great many of those whose duty takes them to an unremitting round of international conferences. However, the programme shows no signs of being curtailed. In fact, in the past year there has been a larger number of international meetings of various kinds than ever. In the United Nations one sometimes has the impression that the main organs are in permanent session, so brief is the gap between their various meetings. Although I recognize that this tendency reflects the vitality of the Organization, the resulting burden imposed upon delegations and the Secretariat inevitably affects the quality of preparations and sometimes of results. I appeal to the Governments of all Member States to consider this situation with care and to make renewed efforts to rationalize the programme of meetings with a view to improving the effectiveness and impact of our work.

In the Secretariat we absorb, as part of our daily duties, a great deal of criticism, some of it valid, of the working methods, programmes and relevance of the United Nations. I hope that Member States will co-operate far more closely with the Secretariat in measures such as I have described above to make our Organization more effective, efficient and relevant to the great problems of our time.

XIV

In the preceding pages I have tried to give a frank assessment of the current state of our Organization as well as some suggestions for the consideration of the Member States. I have no wish to seem pessimistic, but I feel strongly that we must be realistic in facing up to the problems we are called upon to deal with and that we must make a continuous effort to grasp the essentials of those problems. Only then shall we be able to identify the most useful role for the United Nations and the manner in which it can best make a significant contribution to their solution.

As always, the United Nations remains an easy target for criticism and denunciation, especially by the many people in the world who are deeply dissatisfied with the current international situation and are at a loss to know what to do about it. Certainly there is much to criticize in this as in other representative political institutions. But we should be careful to distinguish justified criticisms from the kind of totally negative, and often self-serving, denunciations of the United Nations which castigate the Organization precisely for being the world institution that it is.

It is quite impossible for an Organization composed of 153 sovereign States and having on its agenda most of the contentious issues among those States to remain above controversy. It is very natural for such an institution to be controversial as long as it continues also to be based on the fundamental principles and aims of its Charter. We can expect that those on the majority side will usually find the Organization less controversial than those in the minority, but it should also be remembered that in the United Nations, as is to be expected of an Organization of independent sovereign States, majorities and minorities change according to the subject under discussion, and that there is no so-called "automatic majority".

While I am receptive to justified criticisms of the United Nations, I am far more concerned with the relevance of the Organization to the pressing problems of the world it represents. I continue to feel that the enormous effort in terms of meetings and documents is still out of proportion to the results achieved in terms of practical policies for the future or actual benefits to the peoples of the world. I am also concerned that the Organization should maintain its balance and comprehensive character and that the preoccupation with certain key issues should not detract from the importance of the other problems of the world community.

There is a tendency in some quarters to continue to regard the United Nations as peripheral to the real process of international relations which is supposed to go on in the corridors of power elsewhere. The fact that Governments usually resort quickly to the United Nations in times of trouble seems to me to illustrate clearly the fallacy as well as the dangers of this approach.

One of the most important and least recognized functions of the United Nations is to keep alive ideas and principles which cannot immediately be realized, but which remain as an objective to be strived for and eventually won. The self-determination and independence of the people of Zimbabwe was one such objective which has now, happily, been achieved. There are many other objectives, some more specific than others, where the perennial concern of the United Nations, expressed in debates, hearings, reports and other activities, is an essential factor in marking an issue that needs to be solved and in pointing the way to a solution. Especially on the economic and social side, the Organization can have an extremely important long-term effect in focusing attention on problems, in changing the accepted thinking about them and in formulating programmes, strategies and guidelines which provide the framework in which Governments can approach great problems. It is important, however, that each year we make the laborious effort to ascertain how far we have moved forward on these problems in practical terms.

Early in this report I mentioned that the United Nations system was not originally designed as an operational system. The operational activities it now carries out are therefore for the most part improvised. However, operational activities properly carried out are most persuasive evidence of the potential for effective international action, and they also foster the spirit of common endeavour which I mentioned earlier as the essential unifying factor in our approach to contentious or controversial problems. A great humanitarian or peacekeeping operation, for example, is a striking illustration of international effort at its best, where aims, objectives, ane even difficulties and dangers, are a uniting and inspiring factor. Such examples are the best answer to the weary cynicism of those who profess to believe that the United Nations is a lost cause.

Now that the Organization is 35 years of age, it cannot hope to capture the headlines as easily as it did in earlier youth; but it can hope to look back on an ever-growing record of solid and durable achievement as well as on dramatic occasions when the peace was kept or saved. If we can proceed along this path, we shall gain increasing respect and co-operation, and an authority and effectiveness based on responsibility, acceptance and experience.

For a global institution such as this there are few short cuts or easy successes and many obstacles and traps. We must therefore make a conscious effort to maintain our faith and determination to build upon the foundations which were so well laid 35 years ago.

Kurt WALDHEIM
Secretary-General