

**REPORT  
OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
ON THE  
WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION**

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

## I

Last year, in my report on the work of the Organization, I said that the sails of the small boat in which all the people of the Earth were gathered seemed to have caught a light but favourable wind. At the time, with the clouds of controversy still dark, a less cautious metaphor would have appeared unwarranted. A succession of developments has, however, justified my reasoned hope. With careful and patient navigation, the vessel has come within sight of large sections of the shore.

The developments of the past months have not been fortuitous. They are the result of diplomatic activity sustained over the years by the United Nations and intensified recently. On matters of international peace and security, the principal organs of the United Nations have increasingly functioned in the manner envisaged in the Charter. The working relationship of the Security Council and the Secretary-General has rarely if ever been closer. I am thankful for this as also for the recent improvement in international relations at the global level that has opened new possibilities for successful action by the world body. Multilateralism has proved itself far more capable of inspiring confidence and achieving results than any of its alternatives. Millions around the world have had a gratifying demonstration of the potential of the Organization and the validity of the hopes they place in it.

The international situation is still, of course, marked by points of strain and danger, visible or lurking. Complacency about the resolution of complex problems that still face us is impermissible. However, the possibilities of bringing peace to troubled regions through the efforts of the United Nations have plainly come into view.

## II

The conclusion of the Geneva Accords in April represented a major stride in the effort to secure a peaceful solution of the situation relating to Afghanistan and provide a basis for the exercise by all Afghans of their right to self-determination. It is the first instance of the world's two most powerful States becoming co-guarantors of an agreement negotiated under the auspices of the Secretary-General. The full implementation of the Accords in good faith by all the signatories will significantly serve the goal of peace in the region and the world. Immediately after the Accords came into effect, the United Nations Good Offices Mission for Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP) began monitoring their implementation, including the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. Moreover, within weeks thereafter, the United Nations initiated a humanitarian and economic assistance programme, with a Co-ordinator specially appointed by me, to help the people of Afghanistan in

meeting their serious economic and humanitarian needs at this critical moment in their history.

On 20 August, a cease-fire was secured in the eight-year long Iran-Iraq war in the context of the full implementation of Security Council resolution 598 (1987). A United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) was deployed as at the time and date of the cease-fire. Simultaneously, invitations were extended to the two Governments to send their representatives for direct talks at a high level under my auspices. The talks started on schedule on 25 August. The entire process has exemplified the efficacy of a mandate entrusted to the Secretary-General when actively supported by the Security Council and backed by the complementary efforts of other Member States. For success in the complex task of implementing Security Council resolution 598 (1987), it is essential that both Iran and Iraq continue to act on the conviction that genuine peace will provide to each of them opportunities for reconstruction and progress that a fragile situation cannot. On my part, I will do my utmost to help achieve the just and lasting solution envisaged by the Security Council.

There has been an improvement in prospects for the independence of Namibia. Recent diplomatic activity has made a significant contribution to the peace process in southern Africa, which should facilitate a settlement in Namibia without further delay. The date of 1 November 1988 has been recommended for beginning the implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978). In the light of these developments, the Secretariat has undertaken a review of its contingency plans in order to hold itself in readiness for the timely emplacement of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group in Namibia. It is my hope that current efforts will finally succeed in bringing independence to the people of Namibia.

For many years, the question of Cyprus has involved the continuous exercise of the good offices of the Secretary-General on the basis of a mandate entrusted to him by the Security Council. My latest initiative has evoked greater receptivity from both sides. At the discussion the leaders of the two sides had in my presence on 24 August, they expressed their willingness to meet without any pre-conditions and to attempt to achieve by 1 June 1989 a negotiated settlement of all aspects of the Cyprus problem. Confirming their desire to co-operate with me in my mission, they agreed to start talks on 15 September and to review with me the progress achieved at the initial stage.

During the past year, the prospects for peace in South-East Asia have also improved, through the initiation of a dialogue between the Kampuchean parties and other concerned countries. This is an encouraging trend as it confirms the interest on all sides in achieving a political solution to the problem. I sincerely hope that concrete progress will soon be achieved on the main substantive issues. I have presented to the parties a number of specific

ideas intended to facilitate the elaboration of a framework for a comprehensive political settlement. I remain at their disposal to help bring this process to fruition.

After long effort, an appropriate climate has been established for a just and durable solution of the problem of Western Sahara. Along with the head of the Organization of African Unity, I submitted a peace plan to which the parties concerned conveyed their acceptance with some remarks and comments on 30 August. This will entail a significant operation in the area for the United Nations, with both civilian and military components. I hope that, with the necessary goodwill on all sides, we will soon witness a final settlement of the problem, which will undoubtedly help consolidate the present favourable trend in the region.

All these problems, in their different contexts, have been moved towards solutions in consonance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, with diplomatic activity at multilateral and other levels proceeding in convergent directions. For itself, the United Nations does not seek, and was never meant to seek, any kind of diplomatic autarky; what it requires is that diplomacy among Governments, especially those which are concerned with a particular issue, situation or region, should help realize the aims that it has defined. With the United Nations indicating the principles and the direction for efforts to settle a dispute, all relevant points of diplomatic contact and influence in the network of multilateral relationships can be coherently drawn upon to achieve the objectives of peace. Recently we have had encouraging evidence of the practicality of this process.

There are other regional problems that continue to cause international concern. The situation in the Middle East, a critically important region of the globe, has repercussions on relationships in a far wider sphere. The members of the Security Council have recently expressed their grave concern over the continued deterioration of the situation in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. The uprising since December 1987 has vividly demonstrated the dangers of stalemate resulting from inability to agree on a negotiating process. Even the urgently required measures to enhance the safety and protection of the Palestinian people of the territories, through the application of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 will neither remove the causes of the events that prompted Security Council resolution 605 (1987) nor bring peace to the region. As the underlying problems can only be resolved through a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and taking fully into account the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination, what is needed is an urgent effort by the international community, led by the Security Council, to promote an effective negotiating process towards a solution that will secure the interests of both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples and enable them to live in peace with each other. The next few months may provide opportunities to accelerate this endeavour.

The situation in Central America is the result of convulsions within societies originating in underdevelopment and unjust socio-economic structures. The signing of the Guatemala Procedure in August 1987 signalled the determination of the five Central American Presidents to find solutions to the region's problems free from outside interference and the pressure of geo-political conflicts. I agreed to participate in the impartial international verification of the process of

pacification. Furthermore, at the request of the General Assembly, I formulated a special plan for economic co-operation for Central America, which was considered by the Assembly in May. However, a year after the signing of the Guatemala Procedure, the momentum for peace appears to be faltering and the considerable progress made to date seems to be seriously threatened. The principal merit of the Agreement lay in its requirement for simultaneous progress on two broad fronts: democratization and the cessation of armed hostilities. Its success depends on full compliance and a concerted effort by the signatories as well as the co-operation of all the Governments and parties involved.

The situation in Korea is a legacy of the Second World War and its aftermath. Sustained dialogue between North and South Korea could lead to real progress towards resolving the outstanding issues. It is necessary for all those who are in a position to do so to help foster an atmosphere conducive to an amicable solution of differences between the two sides. Both Governments are aware of my readiness to assist them whenever and in whatever manner they desire.

The region of southern Africa is suffering from a conflict with three dimensions: the question of Namibia, the acts of destabilization against the neighbouring States of South Africa and the system of *apartheid* in South Africa itself. I have already referred to the progress made on the question of Namibia. Acts of destabilization have threatened peace in the whole region. Developments in, or relating to, the continuance of a situation of racial discrimination, which is so repugnant to the spirit of our age, lend further force to the repeated—and hitherto unheeded—urgings of the international community that *apartheid* be dismantled. These urgings provide a renewed opportunity to the Government of South Africa to signal an acceptance of what is just as well as inevitable—the end of *apartheid*. I would appeal to that Government to respond to them in that spirit. Postponing or evading this change of course is fraught with dangers which all the people of the country and its neighbours would certainly wish to avoid.

### III

The present juncture of efforts and potentialities opens fresh perspectives for our common political endeavour. This seems to have prompted the observation increasingly heard in recent months that we may be entering a new phase of world affairs. I take the observation as neither a politician's promise nor a scientist's conclusion. A vast range of actions and policies is required to prove it right. If opportunities for breakthroughs on a variety of issues are to be seized, it seems to be important that we keep in mind the implications of our experience, whether of success or of stalemate, in the efforts to resolve the major political questions on our agenda. In this report, I shall deal with these implications and the emerging outlook for the United Nations. As the resurgence in public interest in the Organization has been rather sudden, it is appropriate to recall the long background of efforts, accomplishments and setbacks behind our current experience.

We are all aware of the reasons why, during the first four decades of its existence, the United Nations has been unable to put in place the reliable system of collective security that its Charter envisaged. This system was based on the assumption that the grand alliance of the victors of the Second World War would continue and develop into their

joint custodianship of world peace. Furthermore, in the words of one of the principal architects of the world Organization, the late President Roosevelt, the system implied "the end of the system of unilateral actions, exclusive alliances and spheres of influence and balances of power and all the other expedients which have been tried for centuries and have always failed". The chastening experience of the most extensive war fought on this planet was expected to transform the older patterns of power relations.

However, developments during the early years of the Organization went contrary to expectations. The assumed radical change was hindered by a variety of factors as far as relationships at the highest plane of global power were concerned. A whole set of circumstances created a continuing climate of mutual suspicion and fear. In such a climate, the great Powers often looked at the United Nations from different angles, with the result that issues that could have been resolved through their joint endeavour became instead added subjects of controversy between them. An almost insuperable obstacle was thus placed in the way of the United Nations to give world peace a durable foundation.

In the difficult phase that naturally ensued—and that has lasted for decades—many who believed in the essentiality of the United Nations were thrown on the defensive. They were driven to enumerate the political achievements of the United Nations in specific cases, but these appeared slim in comparison with the great unresolved issues of our time. I believe that the accomplishments of the world Organization, at any stage of its career, were far larger than what appeared from the case usually made in its defence. Along with the undeniable central fact that the United Nations was often brought to an impasse, in the field of maintaining international peace and security, by the inability of the permanent members of the Security Council to develop a common approach, there was also the fact, equally central, that the United Nations did not allow this factor to block its endeavours: with ingenuity and realism, it found other ways of at least defusing conflicts. If, in one vital respect, it fell short of the Charter, in other respects it kept pace with, and often served as, a catalyst of the process of rapid and peaceful change.

The United Nations played a decisive role in the process of decolonization, which has changed the political complexion of the globe and given vast populations control over their destiny. It gave authoritative definition to human rights and devised monitoring and other mechanisms for encouraging greater respect for them. It codified international law. In partnership with its specialized agencies, it established guidelines to deal with new problems and emerging concerns ranging from the environment, population, the law of the sea, the safeguarding of the rights of the hitherto disadvantaged segments of society like women, children, the aging and the handicapped to terrorism, drug abuse and the incidence of AIDS. It has responded to situations of disaster and dire human need; it has provided protection to refugees. It has had notable successes in the campaign for conquest of avoidable disease in the poorer parts of the world; it has taken measures towards food security and child survival. It has raised consciousness of global economic imperatives; through its development programmes and the specialized agencies, it has represented a vital source of economic and technical assistance to developing countries.

In the political field, even when disabled by differences among the permanent members of the Security Council, the United Nations has displayed a capacity for innovation and played a role that on no reckoning can be considered

peripheral. It has repeatedly acted to limit and control armed conflicts; without the peace-keeping operations launched by it, the theatres of conflict would have undoubtedly represented far greater danger to the wider peace. On major international disputes, it has suggested terms of just settlement. The formulation of such terms is the first requirement for bringing a dispute within a manageable scope and weeding out its implacable elements: this requirement the United Nations has repeatedly sought to fulfil. Above all, the Organization has maintained emphasis on the great objectives of arms limitation and disarmament, the self-determination of peoples and the promotion of human rights, which are essential for the strengthening of universal peace.

These achievements have been made against the backdrop of the most massive transition in the history of the human race. The emergence of new States has taken place at the same time that there has been a proliferation of global concerns, stemming partly from the emerging problems I mentioned above, partly from the impact of advancing technologies and partly from a new mass consciousness of rights leading to the non-acceptance of old inequities within or between societies. The United Nations has not only given shape and expression to the sense of world community but established a basis for nations to develop a concerted response to their common problems.

#### IV

Our experience has thus shown that co-operative management of a variety of global problems, reflecting a community of interest among Member States, is an entirely workable idea. We have now come to, or are nearing, a stage where the extension of this approach to resolving some of the major political issues on our agenda is within our reach.

Changes in perceptions and attitudes, of which we have had pronounced signs since the last session of the General Assembly, suggest that we may be witnessing a transition, however slow or occasionally uncertain, towards a new pattern of relationships at the global level. The transition has the logic of necessity behind it. It is certainly justified by the insupportable cost and the incalculable dangers of a self-perpetuating arms race. It could derive support from the realization that security cannot be viewed in military terms alone nor does the application of military power resolve situations in traditionally expected ways. It is, or can be, propelled by the need for greater attention to the problems of economic modernization or to the social problems that economic growth has left untouched. It is evidenced by trends towards horizontal co-operation between States adhering to different social systems without prejudice to their political alignments. It would seem to respond to the multi-polarity of the world's economic power. All these factors, combined with the technological revolution and the sense of global interdependence, seem to call for radical adjustments of outlook on the part of the world's leadership. There is, of course, no guarantee against temporary reversals or setbacks in the process, nor can ambivalence in the relationships of power blocs be excluded. However, the direction appears to be better set and helped by weightier factors now than at any time in recent years. How this transition will affect the United Nations and how it has been affected by the United Nations are questions of practical import that merit the most serious reflection on our part.

The world community has rightly acclaimed the statesmanship displayed by the leaders of the Union of Soviet

Socialist Republics and the United States of America in jointly expressing their shared perception that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, in initiating a constructive dialogue between their Governments and in concluding the Treaty on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, in December 1987. I believe that the international community, articulating its political consciousness through the United Nations, is more than a witness to agreements that narrow the division between the world's most powerful States. It is deeply affected by, and concerned with, the issues at stake. The sustained emphasis by the United Nations on the goals of arms limitation and disarmament, especially in the nuclear field, and the declared non-alignment of the majority of its Member States, with its implied negation of the concept of expanding spheres of rival influence, have helped to provide the political and mental environment for the ongoing process of mutual accommodation between the great Powers. Not only the mathematics of the arms equation and its economic cost, but also the attitudes of the world beyond have been factors behind this process.

## V

There is a school of thought that holds that the great Powers do not need the world Organization except as a symbol of the world community and that its meetings merely provide a convenient opportunity for periodic bilateral exchanges. The view seems to derive support from the dissatisfaction with the working of the United Nations expressed by one or another of these Powers at different times. However, it fails to recognize their interest in maintaining their positions of respect and influence in a changing world situation. There can hardly be a better place than the United Nations for any Power, large or small, to enhance its influence in the best sense of the term. The United Nations offers every country a forum where, with its resources of knowledge and experience, it can take a lead in framing the universal agenda, draw attention to new concerns and new ways of solving problems and contribute to the process of peaceful change. For a country, large or small, to turn its back, to whatever extent, on the United Nations would be to surrender a good part of its actual or potential influence. To follow a two-track policy—at one level, to owe allegiance to the Charter and, at the other, to seek to marginalize the United Nations—would be to act contrary to the goal of harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of their common ends.

Moreover, while, in the normal course, the great Powers, like others, resolve or reduce their differences through negotiations outside the United Nations, they need the United Nations to come to grips with issues that concern other nations and that, in one way or another, impinge on their own relationships as well. In this respect, the great Powers need to show a sensitivity to the expressed wishes of the majority of Member States. I have not the slightest doubt that these wishes are based on genuine concerns and not on any primordial opposition, far less hostility, to the policies of one or another major Power. All this argues for greater, not less, support of the United Nations, for engagement and not grudging participation in its work.

I welcome the efforts being made to control rhetorical inflation in the debates of the General Assembly, to promote civility in dialogue and indeed to develop, even if gradually, a balance between debate and negotiation, the parliamentary and the diplomatic approaches, which are equally part and

parcel of the United Nations. Continuing public debate is meant to exert pressure towards negotiations; when it can no longer do so, it defeats the aims of its own sponsors. Resolutions are meant to keep alive the goals to be achieved and to ensure that these goals are not lost sight of in a multitude of other concerns. In that perspective, they can become an indispensable factor for the successful outcome of negotiations and can be perceived as resolutions in the full sense of the term, not as incantations or mere formulations of theory. But they become ineffective when they look like stock resolutions. There needs to be an adjustment of political attitudes on all sides to the double requirement of making resolutions more purposeful and of paying respect to them as genuine expressions or reminders of widely shared concerns.

## VI

A primary fact of the present world situation is that, while the power to destroy the Earth is concentrated in a few hands, the power to make and strengthen peace is widely dispersed.

This makes the engagement of the United Nations—the only instrumentality that can ensure the full representation of all concerned parties and relevant viewpoints—central to the great task of resolving regional conflicts. The Organization's long experience of handling these conflicts has certain implications that, I feel, need to be taken into account for sound and workable policies in future.

Some of these implications flow so directly from the Charter that to restate them can look like emphasizing the obvious. Yet, at the hopeful stage we have reached now, they have gained fresh pertinence from a practical point of view. The Charter obligation of settling international disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, for instance, would imply that these disputes should be kept under constant review by the Security Council. This, in turn, would preclude an attitude of passivity towards a conflict when it is in a phase of relative quiescence. It would certainly not justify tacit acceptance of an inherently brittle *status quo* in the context of any conflict.

Another implication of our current and recent experience is that when an armed conflict erupts and as long as it persists the utmost care needs to be taken by other Powers, global or regional, not to add to its size or intensity. This does not exclude sympathy with the side perceived to be the victim. As I said in my annual report five years ago, regional conflicts have been viewed as wars by proxy among more powerful nations. The improved bilateral relations between the major Powers could arrest this dangerous trend. But not only they are involved. When the tensions or differences between the major or middle-sized Powers are grafted onto a conflict that could otherwise be confined to those immediately involved, the conflict is not only widened: it becomes intractable as one or the other party feels encouraged in its obduracy and neither feels any incentive to explore the possibilities of compromise. Moreover, the Charter obligation of activating or supporting the United Nations in resolving a conflict is inconsistent with what may be called permissive neutrality.

The whole Charter system of collective security rests on the permanent members of the Security Council applying a sense of common purpose to addressing a conflict as soon as it erupts. As long as they view regional problems in the framework of their own rivalries solutions will be blocked.

Once this dark shadow is removed from the diplomatic landscape these problems can be addressed in the right perspective. This would result in a more judicious and principled use of the veto. A principle underlying the Charter is that membership of the Security Council, both permanent and non-permanent, is to be regarded as service to the cause of peace rather than as a function of unilateral positions or interests. With the adoption of resolution 598 (1987) by the Security Council, there has been a reassuring and unanimous interest in restoring the Council's peace-making capacity. I believe that fresh avenues have been opened for a consideration again of some of the ideas I submitted in my annual reports in 1982 and 1983 about making the Security Council more effective.

The effectiveness of the Security Council, however, requires that once it has made a determination on a dispute all Member States give it full support in the sense not only of accepting an agreed text, but of providing strong diplomatic backing for it. The Charter certainly calls for the application of the collective influence of Member States to lend irresistible weight to a just solution. Furthermore, in carrying out its duties under the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, the Security Council acts on behalf of all Member States.

Peace-keeping operations have proved to be an inescapable necessity in the context of many conflicts. Their success, however, depends not only on the consent of the parties, but also on the consistent support of the Security Council, on a clear and practicable mandate, on the readiness of Member States to volunteer troops and on adequate financial arrangements. These considerations become more important in view of the evolving world situation, which could well assign a broader role to the peace-keeping operations of the United Nations. They might possibly have to be extended to the maritime environment and adapted to new types of situations that have international implications. I believe that attention should be paid to the need for the United Nations to be better prepared for launching peace-keeping operations, sometimes at short notice. In the broad context of these operations, it is gratifying that all permanent members of the Security Council are now in favour of the peace-keeping aspect of the Organization's work. The valour, heroism and sacrifice of the soldiers of peace who man these operations evoke the most heart-felt tribute from all of us.

Peace-keeping, of course, can only be a palliative if it is not made to serve as a prelude to, or to accompany, negotiations towards a comprehensive settlement. A situation of stalemate or worse about the resolution of the dispute underlying a conflict can cause frustration and despair, which, in the long run, may jeopardize the usefulness of the peace-keeping operation itself, regardless of how well it has managed to moderate or control the conflict.

Moreover, I feel that better possibilities for peace-making can be realized by the employment of a more forthright kind of diplomacy. Let us not forget that peace is secured by agreements, not by the illusion of agreements. When negotiations are envisaged, the adoption of a resolution by the Security Council lays the ground for—but does not necessarily conclude—the diplomatic process required. Negotiations on the basis of the resolution are rendered more difficult if different interpretations are put on its provisions by its framers. The adoption of an agreed text on a controversial issue has certainly the merit of defining the terms of its settlement; in this sense, a vague definition (providing a certain latitude for negotiations) is preferable

to no definition at all. However, what is required for solutions to emerge is not merely the endorsement of an agreed text by the members of the Council but also their shared understanding of that text and co-ordinated policy on its basis. A cohesive approach in the spirit of the Charter, regardless of differences of perception, interest or ideology, is indispensable for resolving conflicts.

## VII

Strengthening the prospects of peace can entail concrete operations for the United Nations in addition to those of peace-keeping. As peace initiatives addressed to specific situations make headway, the tasks, essential from both the political and the humanitarian points of view, of providing relief to the affected populations and arranging the rehabilitation of those displaced fall primarily on the United Nations. The special programme of humanitarian and economic assistance for Afghanistan is a particularly significant example as is the increased co-operation programme in support of efforts for peace in Central America. In addition, emergency relief efforts organized, for instance, for Ethiopia, Lebanon and Mozambique demonstrate the continuing engagement of the United Nations in the alleviation of the massive suffering caused by conflicts or other adverse circumstances. The work in the past years of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and others in meeting the basic needs of destitute refugees and displaced or suffering populations has established a sound basis for this kind of effort. I am grateful for the generous response of Governments to the calls made for material support.

## VIII

Resolving conflicts is a prime responsibility of the United Nations but avoiding them is equally necessary for the maintenance of peace.

The continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America have been the scene of a large number of armed conflicts during the existence of the United Nations. It is one of the most disquieting features of our age that inter-State conflicts should occur when Governments could easily avail themselves of the machinery of the United Nations or of other multilateral organizations to help resolve their disputes. The number of those killed in hostilities between Iran and Iraq provides a massive—and, I hope, conclusive—testimony to the human cost of war.

Fortunately, there are also glimmerings of hope in diverse areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Some signs of developing common regional perspectives are visible at several points of the globe. Moreover, encouraging examples have been set of States resorting to judicial settlement of their disputes. I would appeal to Governments to make it a practice, as far as possible, to refer justiciable cases to the International Court of Justice. A tradition will thus be established of having recourse to law, which can avert many possible conflicts, with their incalculable waste. Moreover, the hopes we derive from a change of perception and attitude at the global level will be considerably fortified if similar changes dispel fears and suspicions at the regional level.

In the late twentieth century, violent civil strife and social turmoil are not confined to any one region of the globe. In its current state of flux, human society contains smouldering elements, which often flare in explosive violence. The internationalization of crime, with traffic in drugs and terrorism its most appalling signs, can subvert friendly relations among nations unless Member States strengthen their multilateral co-operation in saving the present and future generations from a new kind of scourge. The United Nations has taken an unequivocal stand on ways and means of fighting these new dangers to human society. These means can be used only if Member States maintain and strengthen a sense of social solidarity.

Global society has been lately much afflicted by disregard for international law. It is obvious that international confidence would rest on quicksand if the domestic necessities felt by Governments were allowed to override the international obligations they have solemnly undertaken. Without international law respected by all States there can be no stable framework for multilateral co-operation in our highly complex world of sovereign States and conflicting interests. It sounds axiomatic yet it needs to be stressed that States or other international persons are bound by treaties that have been properly concluded and that have entered into force. The principle that treaties must be complied with and carried out in good faith—commonly expressed in the maxim *pacta sunt servanda*, is basic to the Charter. Respect for international agreements is not only one of the fundamental principles of international law; it is the foundation of the organized international community. If this principle were abandoned, the whole superstructure of contemporary international law and organization, including the functioning of the United Nations, the effectiveness of the decisions of its competent organs and resort to international arbitration or judicial settlement of justiciable disputes, would collapse. It is in the equal interest of all States, large or small, to work towards a world where nations will operate within a complete, coherent and viable system of law. Any movement away from this goal holds equal danger for all.

## IX

Disarmament and the regulation of armaments, with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources, to use the language of the Charter, will remain a decisive test of the improvement of international relations and the strengthening of peace. The Charter envisaged a system for regulating armaments when the arms race had nowhere reached its present scale and when it did not threaten to be, as it is now, both a cause and an effect of tensions between States at the regional as well as the global levels.

Over the years, considerable work has been done in formulating the principles that should govern disarmament and defining the issues involved in it. However, the translation of these principles into actual plans has remained an elusive goal. In a global climate of distrust, at times exaggerated, the arms race acquired an air of inevitability and discussions about halting and reversing it appeared futile. However, the refreshing change signified by the signing of the Treaty on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles by the USSR and the United States as well as the prospect of a reduction

in strategic nuclear weapons seemed to furnish a propitious background to the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which was held from 31 May to 25 June this year. The impressive number of national leaders that attended the session was an indication of the level of concern—and hope—felt all over the world on this issue. The proceedings had a largely non-polemical tone and the bulk of the text proposed for adoption was generally agreed upon.

It was no doubt disappointing that these favourable circumstances did not lead to the adoption of a concluding document with consensus on its entirety. At least two of the questions that blocked this adoption related to controversial issues regarding situations in the Middle East and southern Africa. This showed how regional concerns cast a shadow over the consideration of issues of global war and peace. Nevertheless, the emergence of a better-focused outlook on disarmament was confirmed by a shared acceptance of some important propositions, which provide a basis for productive discussions and action in the General Assembly:

Disarmament is not the exclusive responsibility of the two most powerful States, but a joint undertaking of all States;

While nuclear disarmament must continue to be the primary concern, conventional disarmament has acquired a new importance and urgency;

The qualitative aspect of the arms race needs to be addressed along with its quantitative aspect;

National security needs to be viewed in the broader context of global issues and international concerns;

The goals of disarmament and arms limitation need to be pursued in conjunction with efforts to resolve conflicts, build confidence and promote economic and social development;

The existing machinery for disarmament can and should be utilized better.

Other promising elements in the proceedings of the special session were the common standpoints on the need to conclude a chemical weapons convention at the earliest, to consider the phenomenon of arms transfers, with their impact on situations of actual or potential conflict, to mobilize modern technology in the cause of disarmament and to encourage States with major space capabilities to contribute actively to the objective of the exclusively peaceful use of outer space. It was also agreed that the potentially important role of the United Nations in the verification of multilateral disarmament and arms control agreements needed to be studied in depth.

I believe that, the absence of an agreed final text at the recent special session notwithstanding, all these elements can serve to lend further breadth and substance and a pragmatic tone to the international agenda for disarmament. Immediate attention needs to be directed to the negotiation of those measures in which agreement is possible in the foreseeable future. These include a further reduction of nuclear weapons of the two greatest military Powers and the conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition, transfer and use of chemical weapons and on their destruction. The latter has become a compelling need in view of the shocking evidence, which has been documented in the case of the Iran-Iraq war, of the use of chemical weapons. The vast

growth in the arsenals of conventional weapons, particularly in the regional context, intertwined as it is with arms transfers, also requires urgent consideration.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, designed to serve as a barrier against the acquisition of nuclear weapons, is the multilateral agreement in the field of arms limitation which has been signed by the largest number of States. Nevertheless, there is a growing concern that intensified efforts are needed to remove the very real danger of the proliferation of these weapons, both vertical and horizontal, which exists today. An important step towards mitigating this danger would be universal adherence to the Treaty. The Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty to be held in 1990 will furnish an opportunity to find new ways and means to strengthen the non-proliferation régime. The success of this Conference would provide a strong impetus to efforts aimed at achieving a complete cessation of nuclear-weapons tests and halting the continuous refinement and spread of these weapons.

Agreements or mechanisms with limited participation, fundamentally important though they are, cannot by themselves transform the political environment caused by the present arms situation or secure the commitment of all required for disarmament measures. Nor can the verification of multilateral arms limitation and disarmament agreements and the relationship between disarmament and development be dealt with successfully except in the multilateral framework. To a great extent, a durable improvement in international relations depends on the success of the United Nations in discharging its mandate in this field.

## X

The fortieth anniversary of the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights comes at a time when the evolving world situation lends fresh point and urgency to the notions of human dignity and larger freedom expressed in the Charter.

A most deplorable feature of the present international scene is the frequency and magnitude of violations of fundamental human rights in different countries and regions. Summary arrests and executions, disappearances of individuals, the systematic practice of torture and killings of unarmed demonstrators continue to impose a heavy burden on the world's conscience. There have been reports of the forced exodus and even massacres of large groups of human beings. Timely demonstration of serious concern by Member States is essential if such appalling situations are to be checked now and prevented in future.

The Organization's work in the field of human rights, beginning with the Declaration, joined later by the two International Covenants on Human Rights and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to form the International Bill of Human Rights, has set universally accepted standards for the observance of human rights. The work continues as we approach, for example, the adoption of conventions protecting the rights of two especially vulnerable groups: children and migrant workers. A basis has been laid for constructive dialogue between Governments and the relevant expert committees. This year witnessed the first session of the newest such

body, the Committee against Torture. Yet the struggle remains to give living reality to the provisions that have been made for promoting respect for human rights. Unless a consciousness of these rights becomes a vital element in the political ethos of a society, they are likely to be denied or truncated.

The key elements are knowledge by the individual citizens of their basic human rights and how to protect them and the existence of adequate national laws, procedures and practice for safeguarding them. For the United Nations, therefore, the twin goals guiding activities in this field, this year and in the years to come, will be the widest dissemination of information on human rights and the provision of advisory services and technical assistance for their protection. The mechanisms patiently developed for monitoring violations of human rights and drawing the attention of concerned Governments to them, often confidentially by the Secretary-General, and the functioning of the United Nations organs as focal points for the expression of their concerns by Governments and non-governmental organizations are proving to be invaluable in the great campaign of universalizing the enjoyment of human rights.

The existing machinery needs to be continually strengthened. Universal ratification and faithful implementation of human rights instruments are of the utmost importance. It is in all these diverse ways that the world community can develop methods to confront and remedy denials of human rights. A strong human rights programme can make our task in other areas significantly easier.

## XI

In the economic sphere, the international community needs to act urgently in three areas: debt, trade and commodities, and human resources development.

For many developing countries, the crushing burden of external debt is crippling the development effort. Some progress has been made in dealing with debt problems of the poorest countries, especially those in Africa. I am happy to note the contribution to that end made by the report of the Advisory Group on Financial Flows for Africa, which I constituted last year. But the problems of the middle-income countries are no less pressing. The co-responsibility of debtor and creditor countries for the debt crisis has been increasingly recognized as has the mutual interest in breaking the current deadlock. There is a need promptly to fulfil the commitments made as well as to intensify the search for innovative solutions. Pursuant to a resolution of the General Assembly at the forty-second session, I have personally met with a group of eminent personalities to explore ways and means of finding durable, equitable and mutually agreed solutions to the debt problems of developing countries. I shall make a report to the Assembly separately on this subject.

Debt relief is only one aspect of the problem. Complementary action is needed in increasing financial flows, in particular concessional flows, to support development efforts. An improved international environment is also a prerequisite to restoring and accelerating the pace of economic development. Central to this is progress towards the resumption of more vigorous and healthy growth in international trade. It is imperative that Governments make



every effort to achieve concrete results by the time of the mid-term review of the Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations to be held in Montreal in December. I have also stressed on many occasions the urgency of taking a fresh look at the commodities problem, to see what more can be done in a practical way to alleviate the plight of commodity-dependent countries.

Ultimately, development means improving the human condition. I am gratified by the efforts made by the United Nations and the specialized agencies to draw attention to the importance of human resources development and to spur action to alleviate critical poverty. I hope that these initiatives will gather further momentum in all of the affected parts of the developing world.

The United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development gives me the special responsibility of monitoring developments in Africa. We are currently engaged in a review of progress made so far under the Programme of Action. Despite earnest efforts to carry out adjustments in their national economic policies, most African countries have found little reprieve from the harsh impact of climatic conditions and an unfavourable external economic environment. It seems to me that, while a promising start has been made, a faster implementation of the commitments made by the developed countries is needed to avert a serious set-back to the overall process.

The international community responds generously to emergency requirements and to calls for immediate alleviation of dire needs. Unfortunately, international assistance programmes do not attract the same measure of support when long-term development is at stake. As is demonstrated in Africa, such programmes are necessary if the affected groups are to resume productive lives. Failing this, millions continue to languish in poverty, depending on external assistance for their survival. Remedial action needs to be taken so that they can again become self-reliant and contribute to national development.

Considering the interrelatedness of issues and the interdependence of national economies and bearing in mind the dramatic changes that have occurred in the world economy during the past 40 years, it seems to be imperative that the United Nations system strive to achieve greater harmony and coherence in our collective response to the challenges facing us today and those that lie ahead. However, even as the crucial role of the Organization in the political sphere is being widely supported, the question of how best to utilize its capacity to find integrated solutions to economic and social issues in all their aspects still remains subject to debate.

In my report last year, I had made some suggestions on how to strengthen the Economic and Social Council for fulfilling its responsibilities under the Charter. The Special Commission, established by the Council, has carried out a thorough and useful review of the intergovernmental machinery of the United Nations in the economic and social sectors. It was unfortunate that the Commission could not agree on a set of recommendations about the many activities in the economic and social fields which it discussed. Nevertheless, its discussions reveal substantial areas of agreement on important general principles, which could provide a basis for future action.

I welcome the Council's resolution on revitalization which, when implemented, can greatly enhance its ability to give policy guidelines as well as to monitor and co-ordinate the economic and social activities of the United Nations system. The Council's resolution and the report of the Special Commission will be extremely helpful for further deliberations in the context of the ongoing reform process. I should like to touch upon two elements relevant to this process.

First, the Council's effectiveness depends upon its ability to provide authoritative guidance towards a clear definition of priorities. I continue to believe that this ability will be strengthened if the Council meets at a sufficiently high political level, preferably ministerial, to consider issues of major importance for the international community. Such meetings would enhance the Council's status, credibility and effectiveness.

Second, and closely related to the above, Member States need to consider practical steps to identify those issues which are relatively more important and timely for inter-governmental consideration. In doing so, full consideration needs to be given to the fact that financial, monetary, trade and development issues are interrelated and have profound political and social implications. The concept of sustainable development in its broadest sense has relevance in this context.

When global problems call for global solutions, the value of the United Nations to Member States is apparent to all. Successful global initiatives, whether in the political field (which I mentioned earlier) or in the economic, social or humanitarian sphere, mean operational activities at country or subregional level. Two examples may suffice here.

The global AIDS initiative launched under the leadership of the World Health Organization is already being reflected in country-level activities supported by the United Nations Development Programme, which has been designated the operational arm in this important venture, together with the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund for whom maternal and child health are primary concerns.

The International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, held at Vienna in 1987, assigned a greatly increased role and responsibility to the United Nations, which it is fully committed to meet. Here again, at the country level, the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control and the United Nations Development Programme have joined forces to assist in the development and implementation of specific actions.

It is most encouraging that specific focus has been placed by Member States on operational activities for development in the course of the past 12 months. Conditions may now be ripe for the introduction of significant improvements in the nature and organization of these activities to ensure that they are fully responsive to a rapidly changing and diversified context and able to match rising expectations.

The links between specific global goals and provision of support for related national and subregional efforts can surely be built on to ensure that, in the preparation of a fourth international development strategy for the 1990s, we will be able to count on direct support from some of the operational activities of the system in the achievement of specific objectives. This would add both strength and coherence to our overall efforts in the economic and social fields.

## XII

The state of the Earth's environment is pre-eminently a problem that should evoke a solidarity of response from all nations. It has, however, reached a stage where, without a global ethic and the necessary law, it can give rise to divisive issues with political implications.

The problem is linked with those of poverty, the growth in the world's population to 5 billion and the prospects for sustainable development. It also involves issues of international responsibility. As such, it has too many aspects for any single country or even a group of countries to be able to deal with effectively. A coherent and well-co-ordinated approach can be developed only at the multilateral level.

This year, with the apprehension that the greenhouse effect has begun to affect our planet, public anxiety around the world has increased about the deterioration of the environment. The United Nations Environment Programme has proceeded, together with the World Meteorological Organization and the International Council for Scientific Unions, to develop internationally accepted assessments of the reality as well as the causes and impact of climatic change. The aim is to co-ordinate government policies to prevent, limit, delay or adapt to this change. With the help of a dialogue between scientists and policy makers, an international agreement needs to be evolved and, if necessary, one or more legal instruments adopted in order to address the effects of this ominous phenomenon in planetary experience.

A constructive precedent has been established in this context with the adoption of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer at a conference convened by UNEP in September 1987. This as well as the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer constitute a major step in the development of international environmental law and set an example of managing a world problem before it leads to irreversible damage to human health and the environment.

These reassuring signs of progress notwithstanding, the crisis deepens as a growing population finds itself driven to use irreplaceable natural resources. Desertification, soil erosion, deforestation, swollen cities becoming gigantic sources of pollution, on the one side, and the emission of pollutants into the air by industry, on the other, can have a cumulative and well-nigh unmanageable effect. The unprecedented drought in certain agricultural areas, the acid rain and the more recent phenomenon of trafficking in, and dumping of, toxic wastes are examples of the vexatious issues that need to be forestalled by timely action. Here again, guidelines have been formulated preparatory to a global convention governing the environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes and their movement across frontiers. The issue will require exchange of information, technical assistance in monitoring and control and emergency response in case of accident.

As the Conference on Sustainable Development convened by the Prime Minister of Norway at Oslo in June so lucidly brought out, all issues in the field of environment call for a genuine working partnership among nations in the interest of keeping their common home in good condition.

## XIII

Considering the vast sweep and scope of the possibilities now opening for constructive multilateral action through the

United Nations, the financial health of the Organization needs to be immediately restored. The United Nations cannot function without money. It is still seriously short of funds. This situation includes both an immediate shortage of cash, which threatens insolvency in the next few months, and the virtual depletion of reserves. Lack of reserves means that the Organization will not be able to mount new operations.

The impact of the crisis is heightened by the increasing responsibilities of peace-making and peace-keeping which the Organization has had to assume. Taking into account the new operations which the United Nations is likely to undertake in the next 12 months, its total annual expenses will rise very significantly.

I must ask the General Assembly to consider urgently both the cash and reserves aspects of this crisis and to find ways to ensure that it does not persist. These ways may have to include both new methods of raising money such as voluntary contributions or interest-free loans and also such fundamental measures as changes in the scale of assessments.

I welcome the recent decision of the United States to move towards full compliance with its international legal obligation to pay its assessed contributions to the United Nations. This is a most positive development. Partial payment of arrears will not, however, resolve the financial crisis of the Organization. Until and unless the outstanding contributions of all Member States are paid, the Organization will continue to operate with inadequate current income and virtually without reserves. Meanwhile, if the Organization is to sustain its present and foreseeable peace-making and peace-keeping operations, its reserves must be replenished by the other means that I have mentioned above.

## XIV

Reform and renewal in the United Nations has been one of my main preoccupations. As Secretary-General, I have shared the feeling that the accretions of four decades and a certain inflation of activity had encouraged a bureaucratic resistance to self-review and that we needed a leaner and more effective apparatus. As I have submitted two progress reports on this subject to the General Assembly, the second in April this year, it is not necessary to go into the details of the implementation of Assembly resolution 41/213. I may summarize some of the main points here.

Reform is the joint responsibility of both Member States and the Secretariat. As far as the Secretariat is concerned, a good part of the process pertaining to administration and finance has been completed ahead of the three-year schedule. The appropriations for the programme budget of the current biennium assume an overall vacancy rate of 15 per cent in the Professional and 10 per cent in other categories of staff.

Extensive restructuring has been undertaken in the political and administrative areas of the Secretariat and is under way in the area of public information.

A number of steps have been taken to improve co-ordination among the organizations of the United Nations system and a close look has been taken at field offices so as to avoid duplication and share resources, wherever possible.

A thorough assessment of our management information systems, in the light of current technology, has been

initiated with a view to their eventual integration and the better provision of information required by Member States and the Secretariat.

Restructuring in the economic and social fields is related to the intergovernmental review. I have elsewhere in this report dwelt on this in the context of the work of the Economic and Social Council.

There are limits to the economies that can be effected in the Secretariat. An example is the provision of conference and documentation services essential to the conduct of discussions on issues on the international agenda. Without a decrease in meetings included in future calendars of conferences, past reductions of the size that were recommended in this area would gravely disrupt these services. But a decrease in meetings would mean some curtailing of the activities of the intergovernmental machinery and this would require a decision not by the Secretariat, but by Member States.

This brings us face to face with the fact that the Secretariat has grown not through a self-propelled process, but in response to the demands of the more extended intergovernmental machinery it must service. A rationalization of the structures of the Organization at the intergovernmental level would require decisions by Governments based on a re-examination of priorities among programmes and procedures for a better use of available resources. Such decisions, if acceptable to the generality of membership, would lend further substance to the process of reform.

I must add here that the staff of the Organization has faced conditions of severe strain in the most remarkable spirit. It is the undiminished loyalty of the staff to the Organization that has enabled it to perform its most vital functions, despite a very high vacancy rate. Responding to recent positive developments in the political situation, they have shown readiness and enthusiasm for a higher level of activity in the cause of peace. However, there is a limit to the additional effort that can be reasonably required from the staff. I feel that if Member States wish the Organization to maintain, as it must, the highest standards of competence and integrity, they need to ensure that conditions of employment of the staff remain competitive.

Reform is not an end in itself but a means of improving the services the Organization renders to Member States. The emerging world situation, with major conflicts on the way to solution, is bound to impose additional responsibilities on the Organization—political, economic and humanitarian. It would be paradoxical and discordant if the Organization should face financial difficulties precisely when it has to meet the demands of a more constructive phase of international affairs.

## XV

The advent of a new year, decade or century, or even a new millennium does not necessarily open a new page in the calendar of human experience. There seems to be a growing consciousness, however, that, while humanity has made phenomenal progress in the twentieth century, it has also reaped a harvest of wars and upheavals which, with better wisdom, could have been avoided. The current and preceding decades have witnessed much dangerous confusion. It is not a fanciful supposition that Governments will adjust better to a qualitatively changed and changing world environment. If the expectation is right, the United Nations will be used more purposefully than it has been before. I have in mind the use made of it by all Powers—the great, the medium and the small.

The Charter and the working of the world Organization do not promise a problem-free world. What they promise is a rational and peaceful way of solving problems. Perfect justice in relations between nations may be unattainable but inequities can be reduced. To the great dangers of the proliferation of nuclear and conventional weapons, political disputes, violations of human rights, the prevalence of poverty and threats to the environment have been added new sources of conflict. There is a need for the world's wealth of political intelligence and imagination—and compassion—to be employed in coping with these dangers. It can be done through constant and systematic effort only within the United Nations. Non-governmental organizations play an invaluable role in this respect, especially in campaigns for disarmament and human rights; the future is bound to call for even greater dedication from them. Failure to comprehend and come to terms with the demands of emerging situations will mean suffering and privation for the weak and erosion of prestige for the strong. Greater support for the Organization is, therefore, called for not as an exercise in piety nor in a sudden and passing burst of idealism, but in sober and enlightened recognition of necessity in handling the complexities of international affairs.



Javier PÉREZ DE CUÉLLAR  
*Secretary-General*

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