

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

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**OFFICIAL RECORDS: FORTY-FOURTH SESSION**

**SUPPLEMENT No. 1 (A/44/1)**



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New York, 1989

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

## I

Fifty years ago this very month, Europe was plunged into a conflict that eventually engulfed other continents and became known as the Second World War. As the event had been preceded by a similar one only a quarter-century earlier, it was a stark revelation of the destructive nature of the international system that prevailed at the time. The havoc it wrought moved all the then sovereign States to join and make a radical new departure in international relations. At the conclusion of the war, they founded the United Nations to give peace a more secure foundation.

How secure the new foundation is or is likely to prove in different contingencies has remained an open question through much of the intervening period.

There is no doubt that peace has gained a meaning and dimension that it lacked before—above all, the dimension of multilateral endeavour. No realistic view of human experience from 1945 to the present can ignore the transformation of the world scene reflected by the presence and working of the United Nations. It is under the auspices of the Organization that an international agenda encompassing all matters of common concern to nations has taken shape and a massive change in international life has been effected and, by and large, peacefully absorbed.

But there remained a gaping void—not an institutional one—at the core of the whole enterprise. Ambiguity corroded the answer to the central question of the strength and durability of world peace. Collective security became a hostage of the cold war. Because of this, no major issue of war or peace could be examined on its merits. Disputes festered; wars were waged by proxy; tensions became chronic. The imagery and rhetoric suggestive of an Armageddon entered the language of political discourse. The effect on the United Nations of the policies generated by this state of relations has been amply noted in previous reports. To put it mildly, it left the United Nations in a waiting position—waiting until common sense and the dynamics of the world situation would induce a return to the way of handling international affairs outlined in its Charter.

It has not been fully two years since we have begun to witness signs of such a return. The two major Power blocs have started an assiduous search for bases of stable peace between them. A growing determination on the part of the permanent members of the Security Council to work together has facilitated purposeful diplomatic effort towards the resolution of some of the long-standing disputes. In regional contexts also, approaches are being made and important initiatives taken to reconcile conflicting positions, or achieve a compromise between them. And there is a heightened awareness of a new generation of problems common to all nations.

The year under review has been largely a year for the consolidation and extension of those trends and efforts. I mentioned the negativities of the earlier phase to emphasize

the scope and degree of the transition we are now witnessing. By its nature, this transition could be neither abrupt nor smooth. Problems that should have been solved years ago did not just remain unsolved because of differences between the major Powers: they became more complicated as subsidiary problems were added to them. But now, after years of frustration, they are being seriously addressed. That this means the end of the era of sterile confrontations that began immediately after the Second World War can be a helpful assumption. But though easy to launch, it is the kind of assumption that can float only on a tide of confirmations.

## II

During the year, the United Nations has been intensely involved in activities to bring peace to troubled regions of the world. In an increasing number of cases, its role has been, and is being, looked upon as pivotal to the settlement of problems that not too long ago appeared intractable. Indeed, the assistance of the world Organization is being sought as never before in its history. There has been a palpable change stemming from the recognition that, if there are to be lasting solutions to international problems, these must be based on universally accepted principles as laid down in the Charter. I cannot fail to record my deep gratification at this renewal of confidence in multilateralism and its agents. Today, at diverse points of the globe, representatives of the United Nations and its Secretary-General are engaged in the arduous tasks of peace and my own visits to different areas of conflict have vividly impressed on me the great degree of trust and responsibility placed in the Organization. That the expectations should be fulfilled and not defeated is a matter of the utmost importance to peace.

To bring independence to Namibia has been a fundamental objective of the United Nations and, for me personally, an unremitting concern. The year has been one of major advance towards that goal. The establishment of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) on Namibian soil and the efforts under way to hold free and fair elections under the supervision and control of the United Nations constitute one of the most challenging and significant operations ever undertaken by the world Organization. Its success depends on scrupulous observance of all the provisions of the United Nations plan, the cease-fire arrangements and related undertakings. At the time of writing, there are still serious problems to be overcome. However, the multilateral efforts of the Security Council, the concerned parties and the Secretariat have brought us to a stage where, despite the many difficulties, past and present, the implementation of the plan for the independence of the Territory must be considered irreversible.

It bears repeating in this context that UNTAG, the military component of which does not have powers of

enforcement, requires the full co-operation of the parties, all of whom must continuously respect their obligations and strictly adhere to the agreements and understandings to which they have committed themselves.

The overwhelming majority of the Namibian refugees who had registered for repatriation have now returned under the auspices of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The voter registration process and the election campaign are now well advanced and special care is being taken to ensure that the elections are completely free and fair and that they take place under the effective supervision and control of the United Nations. A draft electoral law is currently the subject of active discussion in order to remove a number of unsatisfactory features; it will be promulgated only when the United Nations is satisfied with the text. The same is the case with the law relating to the powers of the Constituent Assembly. Other major issues that continue to require the most careful attention include the continuing presence in the South West Africa Police Force of former members of a counter-insurgency unit, who are now being confined to base; the complete dismantling of the command structures of the South West African Territorial Force; the release of any remaining political detainees; the assurance of impartial coverage of the elections by the media; and arrangements in the Territory for the period between the elections and independence. Each of those matters is being actively pursued by my Special Representative and is receiving my close personal attention.

The unique international collaboration that has been forged over the last few years, involving the efforts of many parties, must be maintained until the process of bringing independence to Namibia through free and fair elections under the supervision and control of the United Nations is duly accomplished.

In the effort to close a decade of turmoil in the Central American region, the Presidents of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua have laid down concrete plans for the implementation of the goals of peace and democratization that they set themselves two years ago in the Agreement known as Esquipulas II (A 42 521-S. 19085, annex). The monitoring of the electoral process in Nicaragua by the United Nations is under way with a view to ensuring its purity and transparency and thus contributing to national reconciliation. A reconnaissance mission is now in the region to prepare the basis for consideration by the Security Council of a proposal for the verification, by military observers deployed throughout the region by the United Nations, of compliance with the commitments that aid incompatible with Esquipulas II to irregular forces and insurrectionist movements shall cease and that the territory of one State shall not be used to attack another. The United Nations will also be undertaking broad responsibilities in all phases of the voluntary demobilization, repatriation or resettlement of the Nicaraguan resistance and their families. That major project may well require a military component and, in due course, the full use of UNHCR as well as other programmes and agencies of the United Nations system.

While the war rages on in El Salvador, accompanied by widespread suffering, it is to be hoped that new political developments will lead towards dialogue and reconciliation in that country as well. The unequivocal appeal from all five Governments issued at the recent summit at Tela, Honduras (see A 44 451-S 20778), must not go unheeded. The deployment of United Nations military observers

throughout the region could provide a new opportunity to render assistance in those efforts.

The Security Council, in resolution 637 (1989), has now given strong backing to the peace process, which entered into a new phase with the signing of the Esquipulas II Agreement. It has encouraged me to continue to lend my good offices, which I intend to do, and for which I will continue to consult with the Security Council and seek its approval as needed. States from outside the Central American region have an important role to play in assisting the States of the region in their endeavours. A sustained effort is required to ensure that irregular forces and insurrectionist movements in the region co-operate in the implementation of Esquipulas II.

The international community at large, and in particular the major donors to humanitarian and development efforts, have given considerable assistance in the early phases of the Special Plan of Economic Co-operation for Central America, prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 42/1 of 7 October 1987 and 42/204 of 11 December 1987, pursuant to the request of the five Presidents contained in Esquipulas II. The time has now come to buttress the emerging peace by providing the massive support that the region needs to overcome its age-old problems. Similarly, we may well have reached the stage where the plans laid down at the International Conference on Central American Refugees, held at Guatemala City in May 1989, can be put into effect, but these will also require substantial additional support. It is through those efforts in the development and humanitarian fields that the vast number of refugees and displaced persons in this beleaguered region will feel that they have a true stake in peace.

Following a number of encouraging developments that had taken place earlier this year, a conference on Cambodia was convened in Paris last month at the initiative of the Government of France. While the Conference succeeded in working out various elements of a comprehensive settlement, certain substantive political issues stood in the way of the total package needed to bring back to the Khmer people the stable peace that they desperately need after two decades of intense suffering, war and destruction.

I believe that attention should be focused now on preventing a recurrence of fighting, with its readily foreseeable consequences and the uncertainty it implies for all concerned. The follow-up mechanism established by the Paris Conference, under the leadership of the French and the Indonesian Co-Chairmen, offers some hope, however, for the continuation of the diplomatic process and for the reconvening of the Conference. For my part, I intend to continue the efforts I have made in the exercise of my good offices.

In recent months, there have been further constructive developments towards ending the 14-year-old dispute in Western Sahara. Although in August 1988 the parties signified their acceptance, with some remarks and comments, of the peace plan presented to them by the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and myself, practical discussions as to its implementation were required. Following a recent tour of the region, I proposed that a technical commission be established at United Nations Headquarters to work out the details of the implementation of the settlement plan. That proposal was accepted and the first meeting of the commission took place in July. During these meetings, which include representatives of the two

parties to the conflict, the Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, clarification of the arrangements and modalities for the implementation of the peace plan is being provided by the United Nations. The meetings also allow the two parties to express their concerns on each step of the process. A number of sensitive issues remain, which will require the active involvement on a continuing basis of the Chairman of OAU and myself.

Despite the conclusion at Geneva, on 14 April 1988, of the Agreements on the Settlement of the Situation relating to Afghanistan and the unanimous adoption of General Assembly resolution 43/20 on 3 November 1988, the suffering of the people of Afghanistan has not yet been brought to an end. The total withdrawal of foreign troops, which took place in February, was a major step towards a peaceful settlement; further progress requires, however, the full implementation of all parts of the Agreements as well as of the Assembly resolution. There has been an escalation in fighting, with massive infusion of war *matériel*. In the current circumstances, the programme of the United Nations to render humanitarian assistance has, despite every effort, been severely impeded.

The problem relating to Afghanistan cannot be solved except by political means. For this, a consensus is needed at both the international and the national levels. While such a consensus has not yet emerged, efforts are under way to narrow the gulf between the positions taken by the countries neighbouring Afghanistan and other concerned countries. In addition, however, there is a fundamental need for a structure through which the wishes of the various segments of the people of Afghanistan can be validly expressed. In pursuance of the mandate entrusted to me by the General Assembly, I shall persevere in my efforts during the months ahead.

On 20 August 1988, fighting stopped between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq, and United Nations military observers took up the challenge of monitoring compliance with the cease-fire, which, one year later, remains in place.

While the heavy toll in human lives has thus come to an end, this has been only the beginning of the implementation of Security Council resolution 598 (1987). The other steps called for in that resolution towards the restoration of security and stability in the region have yet to be taken. For over a year, my Personal Representative and I have held several inconclusive rounds of direct talks with the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq, as agreed on 8 August 1988, and presented suggestions to facilitate the fulfilment of the resolution in a manner that would generate mutual confidence. Eight years of sanguinary war have resulted in deep mistrust. The question we, therefore, continue to face is how to secure the implementation of a unanimously adopted and mandatory resolution in such circumstances. Lasting peace in the region depends on a way being found to achieve that objective.

Since my last annual report, the search for a solution to the Cyprus question has been particularly active. For the first time in the 25-year history of the problem, the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities have personally committed themselves to a sustained effort to achieve an overall settlement. To that end, and in line with my initiative in August 1988, my Special Representative in Cyprus has hosted regular meetings between the two leaders since September 1988. They also met with me at United

Nations Headquarters in November 1988 and April and June 1989 in order to review the results achieved and agree on how to proceed. Those discussions have been useful in revealing possible options for resolving the issues that comprise the Cyprus problem. While I do not wish to minimize the difficulties and distrust that remain to be overcome, I believe that we have now reached the critical juncture where an overall settlement that will safeguard the legitimate interests and meet the concerns of both communities seems possible. I shall, in keeping with the mandate of good offices entrusted to me by the Security Council, continue to make every conceivable effort to help the two sides seize the opportunity that could now be within their grasp.

Progress towards resolving the outstanding issues relating to the situation in Korea depends on sustained dialogue between North and South Korea. The conciliatory atmosphere around the world and the urge to settle problems that are the legacies of former conflicts will, I hope, facilitate an amicable solution of differences between the two sides. I remain available to render whatever assistance the two Governments may desire towards this end.

The eradication of the unjust and anachronistic system of *apartheid* in South Africa has been a prime responsibility and a universally acknowledged goal of the United Nations. The positive turn of events in Namibia and a political climate conducive to the resolution of regional problems should encourage the prospects of fundamental change in South Africa. It is clear that a mere dilution or softening of *apartheid* will not answer the expectations of the majority of the people of South Africa or of the world as a whole. The United Nations has indicated the steps that the Government of South Africa must take to create an appropriate atmosphere for a national dialogue with the genuine representatives of the majority in order to set in motion a democratic process aimed at shaping the political future of the country. These measures include the release of all political prisoners, the lifting of restrictions on political organizations and individuals, the restoration of freedom of speech and movement and the ending of all other manifestations of the state of emergency.

The General Assembly will devote a special session to this issue in December. I would appeal to the Government of South Africa to frame a positive and credible response to the unequivocal call for the dismantlement of *apartheid*. The opportunity has arrived for it to chart a courageous new course that will allay all fears about its intent and put an end, once and for all, to the oppression and violence that the system of institutionalized racial discrimination and minority rule inevitably entails.

The situation in the Middle East remains a source of profound and intense concern, not only because of the political principles and issues at stake, but also because of the widespread human suffering caused by the failure to resolve those issues. Hopes for early progress in the peace process, which were encouraged by the diplomatic momentum following the decisions taken by the Palestinian National Council at Algiers in November 1988, and at Geneva a month later, have sadly given way to mistrust and doubt among the parties concerned. Bilateral efforts to promote a dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians have thus far been unsuccessful. My constant attempts to pave the way to an effective negotiating process, which have included repeated contacts at the highest level with the parties directly concerned and with the permanent members

of the Security Council, have also until now proved frustratingly inconclusive. Moreover, I am troubled by recent declarations that, in effect, question the applicability of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). Since its unanimous adoption, the resolution has been regarded as the corner-stone of any comprehensive settlement to be reached. Unless there is agreement on that point, it is unlikely that real progress will be achieved.

Meanwhile, the situation in the Israeli-occupied territories grows steadily worse, with hundreds of people killed and thousands wounded or detained since the beginning of the *intifadah* nearly two years ago. The Security Council has repeatedly called on Israel to abide by its obligations under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and I have voiced my deep concern that, despite the appeals of the international community, widespread violation of human rights persists. However, it is the political aspects of the problem that have to be addressed if an end is to be put to the confrontations that occur almost daily throughout the occupied territories. I would, therefore, remind all concerned of the urgent need for an effective negotiating process based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and taking fully into account the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including that of self-determination. The longer such a process is delayed, the greater will be the difficulties in initiating it and the more explosive the situation can become.

The world is appalled by the steady disintegration of the institutions of government and society in Lebanon and by the resort to unprecedented violence by all the parties involved in the Lebanese conflict. On 15 August 1989, after an alarming escalation in the military confrontation in and around Beirut, and with the danger of even further involvement of outside parties, I requested the President of the Security Council to convene an urgent meeting of the Council in view of the serious threat to international peace and security. The Council met the same day and expressed its deep concern at the further deterioration of the situation and appealed to all the parties to observe a total and immediate cease-fire. The Council also expressed its full support for the efforts of the Tripartite Committee of the Arab Heads of State and appealed to all to support those efforts likewise. In accordance with the Council's statement, I am pursuing all appropriate contacts in liaison with the Tripartite Committee to ensure the fulfilment of the Council's intent.

I strongly believe that the international community bears a responsibility to ensure that the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Lebanon are restored. A Member State of the United Nations deserves no less.

### III

With the extraordinary improvement of the international climate during the past three years, there has been a new demand and a new enthusiasm for peace-keeping operations. Four new operations have been set up, and at least three are at present being actively considered. The seeds planted in earlier, less element years are growing and proliferating. The wide recognition of the value of those operations is reflected in the award to the peace-keeping forces of the Nobel Peace Prize last year. New ideas and

new directions for peace-keeping are being discussed, both within and outside the United Nations.

All this is encouraging and promising. It is imperative, however, that we keep the peace-keeping situation under constant scrutiny so that the best use is made of the Organization's capacity and so that we develop this important and valuable activity in a positive and constructive way. There are three main areas that need to be kept under constant review: function, capacity and performance, and support.

As far as function is concerned, we seem to be moving into a number of situations where, although there is a connection with international peace and security, the peace-keeping action is mainly concerned with the situation within the boundaries of a State, instead of taking place on the borders between States or between conflicting parties. Peace-keeping operations are being called on for a wider range of tasks, including the supervision of elections and the monitoring of the implementation of complex agreements.

I believe that it is important to maintain a rigorous analysis of what the United Nations can, and cannot, do, and how it should do it. Here the basic principles on which peace-keeping operations have always been based are a good guide for our actions: a workable mandate; the consistent support of the Security Council; the co-operation of the parties in conflict; the readiness of Member States to make available personnel and resources; a geographically balanced and representative force; an effective and integrated United Nations command; and adequate financial and logistical support.

The method of operation also needs to be kept under constant review. Until now, the use of force by peace-keeping operations has, with one exception, been permitted solely for self-defence in the last resort. We would be wise to stick to that principle. These are not, after all, enforcement operations. But I believe that the new and positive consensus, which for the first time animates the political role of the United Nations, also entitles us to consider how the strength and credibility of peace-keeping forces on the ground can be enhanced. Strength does not necessarily mean using force. Very often it means being strong enough not to use force. Before we embark on too many new and demanding ventures, I should like to see a serious discussion among Member States of the ways in which our soldiers in distant conflict areas can be given the means and the support to command respect and compliance with the decisions of the United Nations to a far greater degree than hitherto. The question of enhancing the credibility and authority of peace-keeping operations needs to be examined here at the United Nations by the Member States, and especially by the members of the Security Council.

Traditionally the personnel of peace-keeping operations have been overwhelmingly military. In Namibia we see a variant of that practice. With the multiplicity of functions now being discussed for peace-keeping, we would do well to consider new combinations of military, police and civilian personnel.

As regards capacity and performance, we have traditionally operated on a shoe-string in peace-keeping. With several new operations impending in different parts of the world, I am very conscious of our need to underpin our peace-keeping capacity here at Headquarters. I believe that Member States can also help—and some have done so

already—by reviewing possibilities for earmarking stand-by troops for peace-keeping. I think we should also look at the training situation and see what can be done to enhance the degree of training for peace-keeping in national armies as a measure of readiness for United Nations peace-keeping duties. Rosters of available senior officers and staff officers might also be helpful in the future.

Support is inevitably the key to capacity and performance. The financing of peace-keeping has a long and not very creditable history. Many of the financial problems of the past had to do with political differences, which are, I hope, no longer with us. None the less we still face a large and debilitating problem in relation to financing peace-keeping.

The truth is that the expense of peace-keeping is minimal by comparison with the costs—human, financial, military—of the alternative. Peace-keeping costs are infinitesimal by comparison with national military expenditures. And peace-keeping could be an important part of plans to reduce these national expenditures.

The current financial arrangements are not only dangerously limiting during the period in which a complex operation is being mounted; they also put an inequitable financial burden on troop-contributing countries. In addition, they tend to diminish the perception of collective responsibility, which is psychologically essential to peace-keeping operations.

I hope that Member States will address the financial problems of peace-keeping urgently and with imagination. A promising one among many possibilities would seem to be the establishment of a special reserve fund for peace-keeping, supported by all Member States. Such a fund would vastly facilitate the timely launching of operations mandated by the Security Council. Contributions to it, whatever its size, would, incidentally, represent a minuscule percentage of current national military expenditures.

Nowhere has the inadequacy of present arrangements been more evident than in the logistical support of United Nations peace-keeping operations. Here again the new political climate should allow a much freer exchange and more co-operation. In particular, I hope that countries with large and far-ranging military establishments will work together to see what can be done to establish a more reliable and responsive logistical framework for United Nations peace-keeping operations.

These are relatively short-term goals. For the longer term, we need to speculate on where peace-keeping fits into the underlying effort to build the international rule of law and a reliable system for the maintenance of international peace and security. When nations work together for those aims, as they now appear to be doing, the effect of representation and of symbolic presences is vastly increased. Peace-keeping is, and always has been, a dramatic way of representing the international will to peace and conciliation in the conflict areas of the world. If it is backed by an international consensus and sustained by a genuinely international effort, it can become a reliable and extremely important part of our broader effort to build a world at peace.

#### IV

Efforts to prevent possible conflicts, reduce the risk of war and achieve definitive settlements of disputes, whether

long-standing or new, are part and parcel of a credible strategy for peace.

The United Nations needs to demonstrate its capacity to function as guardian of the world's security. Neither any alterations in the structure of the Organization nor in the distribution of competence among its respective organs are needed for that purpose. What is needed is an improvement of existing mechanisms and capabilities in the light of the demands of the unfolding international situation.

The prevention of armed conflicts is a mandate envisaged in the provisions of the Charter relating both to the Security Council and to the responsibilities of the Secretary-General. Article 34 speaks of any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute and Article 99 of any matter which in the Secretary-General's opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. However, as has been repeatedly observed, it has been the general practice over the years to address a particular situation only after it has clearly taken a turn towards the use of force. Experience has shown that it is far more difficult to stop hostilities after their outbreak than to restrain Governments from heading towards the point of no return.

In order to activate the potential of the Organization for averting wars, the necessity of earlier discussion of situations threatening to explode needs to be clearly recognized. Timely, accurate and unbiased information is a prerequisite for that purpose. At present, the pool of material available to the Secretary-General consists of information provided by government representatives supplemented by the collection and analyses of published reports and comments. This is manifestly insufficient in cases where more than anticipatory diplomacy is required. Even for such measures as the establishment of observation posts or the dispatch of fact-finding teams, not to speak of the appointment of military observer missions in situations where fighting appears imminent, the Secretary-General needs to have at his disposal information that is dependable *prima facie*, even though it might be subject to further inquiry or verification. Only then can he be in a position to assess whether and when an issue needs to be brought to the attention of the Security Council under Article 99 of the Charter. The invocation of this Article is discretionary and the discretion has to be exercised with a most careful consideration of its possible outcome. There are situations where quiet diplomacy can be more effective in moderating a conflict. In any case, the lack or paucity of objective information can have most deleterious results. But in a setting in which incipient conflicts are under a global watch, there will be less likelihood of confusion and, therefore, of indecision on the part of the Security Council in the matter of halting their escalation. Arrangements, for instance, could be made to receive information from space-based and other technical surveillance systems, which would enable the Secretariat to monitor potential conflict situations from a clearly impartial standpoint, but the question is whether the potential of modern technology can be placed in the service of peace.

More importantly, the Security Council could meet periodically to consider the state of international peace and security in different regions. For such meetings sufficiently to guide and influence the necessary supportive diplomacy, it might be helpful to hold them at the level of foreign ministers and, when appropriate, in closed session. That simple expedient could help ensure that the United Nations

would not be caught unready by developments threatening the peace. Where international friction appears likely, the Security Council could act on its own or request the Secretary-General to exercise his good offices directly or through a special representative. When appropriate, the Council could also enlist the co-operation of the concerned regional organization in averting a crisis.

It cannot be stressed too often that there is usually a point in an impending crisis at which the potential adversaries are readier to make concessions than subsequently they are apt to regard as surrender. Such points offer opportunities for multilateral diplomacy to be at its best in allaying the fears and suspicions that so often lead to belligerency. If difficulties arise at the first turn, it can use other means of contact and communication between the Governments involved. All this implies a conscious policy decision on the part of Member States to strengthen and use the mediatory capacity of the Organization.

It also implies a resolve to use the leverage that lies with the United Nations, particularly with the Security Council, in the form of the collective influence that it can bring to bear on a situation. The invocation of the provisions of Chapter VII of the Charter is an extreme; in the intermediate stages of a party's obduracy against a settlement or against initiating a credible negotiating process to evolve a settlement, the United Nations can mobilize governmental and public opinion and also give salutary warnings of the consequences of a negative stand. Such warnings need not be public; in certain cases, they may be more effective if conveyed in private. However, they will fail to be persuasive if they are not backed, or are not seen to be backed, by the united will of the membership of the United Nations to avert a conflict. While a certain degree of partisanship among Member States on the merits of a dispute is unavoidable, and can even be suggestive of balanced solutions by exposing different viewpoints, there cannot be any division on the primary obligation flowing from the Charter, namely, the prevention of war.

To "settle international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered" is one of the principles set forth in the Charter. The conjunction of peace and justice is less liable to be overlooked by the conduct of multilateral diplomacy than by its alternatives. I am all too conscious how thorny is often the path leading to a just and lasting settlement and how hard is the resistance encountered. But I firmly believe that the United Nations can fulfil its mandate only if it is not daunted by the difficulties involved. By itself, the passage of time rarely brings about solutions to problems. The expectation of disputes ending through sheer attrition is certainly not supported by the experience of the Organization with regard to situations that involve issues of a fundamental nature such as the territorial integrity or political independence of a State or the self-determination of a people.

The United Nations can take credit for recommending the terms of equitable and comprehensive settlement of many disputes of this character that have been brought before it. However, nothing short of concerted or, at the very least, convergent action on the part of Member States, especially the permanent members of the Security Council, designed to bring about the acceptance and implementation of those terms, can suffice to resolve a conflict. Lacking such effort, the mounting of peace-keeping operations or mediation can produce an illusion of calm, beneath which disputes fester

and resentments grow, threatening new outbreaks of hostilities. The pain of conflicts needs more than palliatives.

Political and moral suasion, combined with a judicious use of leverage, has been the main basis of multilateral efforts aimed at the settlement of disputes. However, there are categories of disputes that lend themselves to settlement by other means. Article 36 of the Charter requires that "legal disputes should as a general rule be referred by the parties to the International Court of Justice in accordance with the provisions of the Statute of the Court." I warmly welcome recent pronouncements made in that context.

As legal disputes arise in various parts of the world over a wide range of issues, there may be cases where the parties concerned are prepared to seek settlement through the International Court of Justice, but cannot proceed owing to a lack of legal expertise or funds. There may also be cases where the parties are unable to implement a decision of the Court for similar reasons. Considering this, I have established a special voluntary trust fund, which, under certain conditions, will be used to assist developing countries that lack the necessary means for recourse to the Court or for implementing its decisions.

Moreover, there have been, and in all likelihood there will be, many disputes that have a clearly legal component; assuming respect for judicial opinion, a reference to the Court on that aspect of the issue could at least help make the whole dispute more amenable to solution. There are also cases that are arbitrable. International arbitration has been resorted to with benefit to peace in many cases during the existence of the United Nations but its use needs greater encouragement in all situations to which it is applicable.

## V

Progress towards arms limitation and disarmament demands persistence and considerable hard work. Beyond this, as we have seen, it requires the stimulus and guidance that only inspired political leadership can provide. In one area of major importance in this field, all these have been in evidence in the past year. As we survey the entire scene, however, global stability and peace are still in danger. The steps towards arms reduction taken by the two militarily most powerful States and the proposals under consideration between the two major alliances present a marked contrast to the lack of comparable progress elsewhere.

No complacency is reflected in noting the credit side of the balance. It is apparent that, even when all their proposed reductions are achieved, the members of the two military alliances will still have far more weapons than all others together. Nor can the stresses and strains that exist in so many other parts of the world be ignored. But the fact remains that in areas where confrontation has been the norm for so many years, major changes in attitudes and perceptions are taking place and long-standing differences are being reconciled.

In this regard I warmly welcome the proposals that have been put forward concerning conventional arms reductions in Europe. Furthermore, over half the intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles affected by the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty) have already been removed and physically destroyed. To complement those actions with major reductions in conven-



tional weapons and forces would signify a change of fundamental importance.

With the resumption of the bilateral negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States on the reduction of strategic offensive weapons, the pursuit of a 50 per cent cut in these arms should occupy the centre stage of nuclear disarmament efforts. It is imperative that the momentum established by the agreement and subsequent successful implementation of the INF Treaty should not falter. The world awaits a successful outcome on this issue. A slowing down and reversal of the vertical arms race would be all the more important in view of the forthcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons due to open at Geneva in August 1990.

At the Paris Conference on chemical weapons held in January 1989, 149 States unanimously called for early agreement on a convention on the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition, transfer and use of chemical weapons—and on their destruction. This has intensified the effort being made in the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva to achieve a complete ban on those weapons. The problems still impeding the attainment of this objective, including the question of verification in particular, are complex and difficult but not insurmountable. Considering the horrifying prospect of the spread of these weapons, the present opportunity to agree on a complete ban must be seized. I strongly urge all concerned to demonstrate a concerted will to achieve that goal at an early date.

For several years I have called for action on two particular issues: nuclear tests and conventional weapons. Although no specific agreement has yet evolved on either, some constructive negotiations are now taking place bilaterally and regionally. These are encouraging signs. I remain convinced that significant additional restrictions on nuclear testing beyond the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water of 1963, leading progressively to a complete halt, together with major reductions in nuclear weapons, offer the best way to release the world from the fearful possibility of nuclear war. I hope that the Conference on Disarmament will soon be associated with the bilateral efforts on the nuclear-test-ban issue. These measures, supported by conventional arms reductions such as those now being negotiated at Vienna, would do much to solidify the growing sense of confidence and trust.

The issue of conventional disarmament is beset with many regional and local implications. Even so, if dangers to peace around the globe are to be overcome, one of the essential requirements is that means be found to regulate the transfer of arms. The need for action both within and outside this Organization towards this end becomes ever more pressing. Many developing countries are draining their economies to purchase highly sophisticated weapons. On their side, arms-producing countries are vigorously pursuing weapon sales and transfers to bolster their trade balances. Efforts at the United Nations, with the help of governmental experts, to introduce greater transparency into arms transfers would be a necessary first step in arresting this alarming trend.

Apart from arms transfers, the increasing sophistication of new weapons and their proliferation, due to wider knowledge of the technologies involved, aggravate the already existing difficulties. The spread of knowledge, not only of nuclear weapons, but of chemical weapons and

missile technology, introduces another potentially destabilizing factor. It is important to ensure that a qualitative arms race will not follow quantitative disarmament. This presents the challenge of harnessing scientific and technological progress for humanity's benefit rather than for armed confrontations.

A quarter of the resolutions adopted each year by the General Assembly address issues of disarmament. This, of course, indicates the depth and continuity of the Assembly's concern with these issues; it also reflects the consideration that the United Nations should continue to be at the forefront of multilateral efforts in this field. However, the number of resolutions and a reiteration of old positions does not meet the demands of new circumstances. To give an example of the questions that need to be faced now, the United Nations will be convening a conference on conversion of military to civilian industries next year in Moscow. The magnitude and complexity of the issues involved in the multilateral disarmament process demand that we explore all avenues to strengthen the role of the United Nations in this field and make more effective use of its deliberative machinery.

By in-depth study and careful analysis, by providing objective data and stimulating informed discussion, the Secretariat will play its part. It is also ready to undertake a role in multilateral verification of disarmament agreements, a subject on which a group of governmental experts has already been at work. However, the responsibility for action and leadership rests with Member States, particularly in addressing issues of specific relevance to their own regions.

With the new turn in the global situation, the broad objectives of arms limitation and disarmament, which were regarded as utopian, have begun to appear practical and achievable. But it is tangible progress towards these objectives that will lend permanence to the change.

## VI

One of the most deplorable phenomena of current international life is the incidence of international terrorism. Calculated as it is to cause panic and disorder and to inspire and manipulate fear for the achievement of political ends, it violates human rights, and also lends a note of dangerous ambiguity to the dividing line between war and peace. It thus impinges directly on relations among States and shows how, thanks to the uncontrolled or indiscriminate supply of sophisticated weapons, organized violence is being increasingly privatized.

The firm and consistent position of the United Nations with regard to the prevention of international terrorism leaves no room for doubt or equivocation. Both the General Assembly, in its resolution 40/61 of 9 December 1985, and the Security Council, in resolution 579 (1985), have taken pronounced stands on the question. The resolution of the Council unanimously condemned all acts of hostage-taking and it was recalled on 31 July when the news was received that a senior official serving with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) had, in all probability, been killed following his abduction months earlier. By its resolution 638 (1989), the Security Council reiterated its condemnation of all acts of hostage-taking and abduction and demanded the immediate safe release of all hostages and abducted persons wherever and by whomever they were being held. For my part, I have repeatedly condemned this inhuman practice and, as requested by the Council, I will

continue my efforts to seek the release of all hostages and abducted persons. In this connection, I will maintain my contacts with all those who might be in a position to use their influence towards achievement of this objective and the prevention of further acts of hostage-taking and abduction.

The question of defining terrorism and investigating its underlying causes does not diminish the urgency of taking preventive measures. There may be varying perceptions of the threat but no country is guaranteed safety from the danger. It is in the interest of all to deny to the perpetrators of terrorist acts the facilities and instruments they use.

Six specific conventions related to international terrorism have been elaborated since 1969; they have at least curbed terrorist activity in some spheres. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has urged its member States to expedite research on means of detecting explosives and on security equipment. The work of ICAO is complemented by Security Council resolution 635 (1989), which calls upon all States to share the results of such research and co-operation with a view to devising an international régime for the marking of plastic or sheet explosives for the purpose of detection. Such a régime would contribute significantly to safeguarding civil aviation and other potential targets. The problem is one that the United Nations will need to keep under continuous review until the time when the spill-over of political violence into the international domain will finally have been checked.

## VII

To promote and encourage respect for human rights is not only a matter of legitimate international concern; it is also one of the main purposes and principles of the United Nations, as proclaimed by its Charter. Like every other purpose, it demands consistent pursuit, undeflected by considerations of short-term expediency. Like every other principle, it suffers discredit if it is selectively invoked.

Under the International Bill of Human Rights, consisting of the Universal Declaration and the two International Covenants based thereon, the international community has accepted the protection of human rights as a permanent obligation. A number of legal instruments have been adopted under the auspices of the United Nations that define fundamental rights in various contexts. Last December, the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment was added to this corpus (General Assembly resolution 43/173, annex). This year the General Assembly will consider two significant draft instruments: an optional protocol for the abolition of the death penalty and a draft convention on the rights of the child. Intense thought and effort have been devoted over recent years to the question of how to assure the rights of children, whom all societies and cultures look upon as humanity's most cherished and also its most vulnerable resource. This shared concern is reflected in the draft convention.

The elaboration of this considerable body of international law has been one of the main accomplishments of the United Nations in laying the foundation of a universal culture of human rights, transcending the differences among nations on account of ancestral traditions, systems of thought or belief, world-views and levels of social and economic development. The concern has been not only

normative or theoretical, however: it has taken practical shape in efforts to secure adherence to the commonly accepted obligations in particular cases brought to the attention of the United Nations. This is done through examination of alleged violations, through public discussion in, and pronouncements by the Commission on Human Rights and the various Sub-Commissions and, in certain cases, through confidential representations by the Secretary-General. Moreover, under a variety of legal instruments, mechanisms have been established for monitoring the observance of human rights. Currently, priority is being given to strengthening national infrastructures for the observance of human rights by providing advisory services and technical assistance. As greater awareness on the part of individuals is the key to assuring the protection of human rights, the United Nations, within the means available to it, is launching a world public information campaign on human rights.

Despite this effort towards the fulfilment of one of the main conditions of an international order of justice, sombre realities are facing us still. Nothing that has been done can lighten the burden on the human conscience imposed by the frequent, sometimes massive, violations of human rights in different parts of the world. The institutionalized system of racial discrimination in South Africa continues to be a most glaring example; in other areas also, the gross mistreatment of ethnic groups, the systematic practice of torture, the killings of unarmed demonstrators, the disappearances of individuals, summary arrests and executions furnish a most deplorable record. The year under review has brought little relief.

Such acts not only cause moral outrage; they also lead to political consequences injurious to the long-term interests of peace. If anything is writ large on current experience, it is the truth that the stability of national and international society can only rest upon a foundation of assured human rights. Issues of human rights provide the deeper tones and shadings to political and social relations within and among nations. Governments, of course, have the right -- indeed, even the obligation -- to maintain civil order and to use proportionate force in their territories against terrorism or other forms of violence. However, it is becoming increasingly plain that no Government can expect immunity from international exposure and criticism if it flouts human rights in trying to overcome political dissidence or ethnic unrest. The damage done to the self-confidence of its people and to its international prestige may be ignored in the short term but it will not be negligible over the long run.

I must pay tribute here to the efforts of non-governmental organizations and concerned individuals throughout the world who are championing the cause of human rights. Sincere efforts untainted by ulterior political considerations are bound to yield beneficial results.

The United Nations has done much to illuminate the interrelationship of peace, justice, freedom and human rights. But it is Governments that must realize this interrelationship in their laws and legal procedures. Far-sightedness on their part is required to help make a reality of what is meant to be a common condition of civilized life.

## VIII

It is apparent from the current status of the questions relating to regional conflicts and to arms limitation that

much ground is yet to be covered if the world is to move to conditions of lasting peace. Over and above these specific questions, the flux observable at many points of the political landscape is likely to present challenges different from those encountered before. Not only diplomacy but the attitudes of Governments will need to respond to these challenges in such a manner as to reduce disharmony and avert disruptions to peace.

The fact that there is now a fluidity in international relations, in marked contrast to the rigidity of the recent past, argues for greater care in handling the situations that may arise from time to time. In the first place, no change for the better in the political climate of the globe can be regarded as irreversible; to ignore the provisional element in it would be to lapse into complacency. Secondly, a movement away from entrenched positions holds no guarantee by itself that knotty issues will not arise which will need to be unravelled with a deft and high-minded approach. Thirdly, we seem to have reached one of those turning points in the evolution of international life at which personal contacts and greater ease of communication between the leaders of nations can play a larger role than they do in phases which follow a set pattern.

Apart from this aspect of world affairs, which affects diplomacy, especially of the most influential States, there is a ferment in large sections of the global society—and no policy on either the national or the international plane can be viable if it is based on a faulty diagnosis of the various causes of unrest. Whatever shape the turmoil takes, whether it be the assertion of ethnic identities or the demand for a better deal in political or economic terms, or even if it leads to upheavals within States, two requirements seem to be paramount: the stability of international relations must be preserved to the maximum possible extent and the universal standards of respect for human rights must be maintained.

At this critical stage, the mandatory principle of non-intervention by States in one another's internal affairs acquires added importance. Prudence and restraint will need to be fully employed to prevent internal upheavals in any State from becoming the cause of international conflicts. No State can, of course, insulate itself completely from the currents of information and opinion flowing in the world, but ultimately each national society must find its own equilibrium in accordance with its own genius. Considering the web of memories, perceptions, aspirations and cultural values that constitute national life, any forceful pressures from outside to give it a particular form can hold little constructive promise in the long run. More often than not, they provoke a reaction different from the one desired. I am conscious that no precise formula in terms of law or international ethics can be laid down in this context because definition in such matters can prove treacherous. However, the principles of the Charter do provide the necessary guidance.

If political wisdom and caution on all sides were needed at times of crises in the past, and did indeed serve to avert wider conflict, the kinds of situations that can arise in the future will make even greater calls on statesmanship. As myriad forces that shape the future become less and less manageable by Governments acting alone, States will need more and more to co-operate with one another and adopt practices and policies that will support the emergence and the consolidation of the rule of law. Certainly, the rampant violence that at present scars large parts of the world and the menace of terrorism from which no nation is immune

cannot be overcome by recourse to methods contrary to international law.

The historic moment we have reached abounds with opportunities. If seized with an open mind, and with no intent to take advantage of any country's difficulties, they can lead us to a fruitful phase of international relations unrecognizable in traditional terms. By the same token, if they are misused, even the older civilities will not hold if the more vulnerable among societies around the world slide into chaos.

## IX

The prospects of war or peace, regional or global, will no doubt always be the overarching concern of the international community. However, the state of the world economy and the possibilities it opens for sustainable development and social progress in disadvantaged sections of the globe also have major political implications. So, in an increasing degree, do certain social issues.

I would like to see the United Nations play a key role, as envisaged in the Charter, in promoting social progress and better standards of life for people throughout the world. This role becomes all the more important in the situation we are facing at present. There is an opportunity to extend to the economic and social spheres the same spirit of co-operation as has recently emerged in the political field. Indeed, the progress we have achieved in the global political climate can prove precarious if the economic climate remains adverse for the majority of the world's population.

During the past year there has been an apparent improvement in world economic conditions as world output and international trade in particular showed significant growth. However, the expansion of the world economy has not been even: some areas have enjoyed continuing prosperity while others are persistently plagued by depression and economic disorder. It would be inaccurate and facile to assume that the present lopsided growth patterns are due in all cases to inherent differences in underlying potential or to unsound policies. Nor should we expect these persistent imbalances automatically to correct themselves.

I remain deeply concerned about certain aspects of the current economic situation, particularly the widening economic and technological gap between the developing and the developed countries. The situation of the developing countries is being worsened by the continuing net transfer of resources to the developed countries. In much of the developing world, particularly in Africa and Latin America, most economies continue to stagnate if not regress, while in the industrialized world, the central issue is the need to maintain inflation-free growth.

Debt remains a major constraint to the resumption of growth in many developing countries. It is clear that a common understanding on a solution to the problem of the external indebtedness of developing countries must now be reached quickly in the context of their growth and development. A review and strengthening of the current debt strategy is an urgent necessity. While the new thinking on debt in official circles is a welcome development, what is needed is a broad-based approach that includes substantial debt reduction. Every effort must be made to ensure that the measures taken are adequate and timely. Failure to find a just and equitable solution to the debt crisis in the near future can lead to a collapse of social and political structures in many developing countries.

It is encouraging that the major industrialized countries have committed themselves to achieving substantial progress in the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations in order to complete it by the end of 1990. These trade negotiations must lead to significant benefits and address the problems of the developing countries. Real progress has also to be made in alleviating the difficulties faced by developing countries that are dependent on commodity exports.

During the past year I have visited a large number of developing countries and I have been deeply impressed by the strenuous efforts they are making, often against formidable odds, for the welfare of their peoples. However, the external economic environment aggravates the difficulties they face in the process of adjustment. I believe that it is now essential to resume a broad-based North-South dialogue on international economic co-operation that takes fully into account the views of all countries. The special session of the General Assembly scheduled for early next year can provide an excellent opportunity for it. I trust that the session as well as the preparatory process for the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade will lend fresh impetus to thinking and action on international co-operation for development.

Discussions are continuing for the restructuring of the intergovernmental machinery in the economic and social sectors, including the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council. Although the Council has made progress in enhancing its effectiveness, what is required above all at this juncture is an increased commitment by Member States to utilize and support the Organization in its economic and social activities. Only thus can the full potential of the United Nations in this sphere be realized.

## X

At the present stage of the evolution of global society, the impact of technology has radically altered the means and methods of production and communications and, in the field of health, made rapid strides towards enhancing life expectancy and reducing disease. This has constituted genuine human advance in diverse respects. However, it is ironical that, at the same stage, certain processes are bringing civilization to a crisis. I refer in particular to the deterioration of the natural environment, the explosive growth in the world's population and the emergence of a variety of social trends that are steadily gnawing at the fabric of society.

The United Nations perceived the coming of the environmental crisis years before the phenomenon became a matter of public debate and policy in individual countries. The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held at Stockholm in 1972, sought to address the question comprehensively. Now, with the possibilities of disastrous change in climate no longer dismissible, daily signs of an ailing and exhausted Earth are evoking universal concern.

Two trends in the matter of treating the planet's affliction are currently discernible. One of them is reassuring; the other can be cause for apprehension.

The positive trend stems from the increased recognition in all countries, from the most industrialized to the least developed, of the gravity of the problem and the urgent need to deal with it in a practical way. This has been highlighted by pronouncements made and initiatives announced at the

highest level of the world's leadership. It represents a most welcome step forward and may well signify the birth of a new kind of loyalty, an Earth-patriotism, a looking at the planet and its atmosphere as an object for protection and not for aggression and pillage.

The cause for apprehension, however, is that Governments may adopt unilateral approaches that will lead to overlapping, duplication and waste of resources. The problem of the environment is *sui generis* in many respects; agreement about its gravity notwithstanding, different countries may have different perceptions of its implications and, therefore, different priorities. This underscores the need to evolve an integrated response and establish the forms of international co-operation that the situation so clearly demands.

The environmental crisis is manifested in many forms, ranging from the depletion of the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, global warming, desertification, land degradation and impoverishment of the Earth's biological diversity to the vexatious issue of the trans-border disposal of hazardous wastes.

Since the emergence of the crisis, the United Nations has taken a number of steps to promote an understanding of the magnitude of the problem and to find means for arresting the degradation of the natural resources of our planet. The 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, which came into force this year, prescribed the action to address the problem of ozone depletion. The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal was adopted in March 1989. A joint United Nations Environment Programme/World Meteorological Organization panel is studying the pace and nature of climate change and its likely environmental and economic impact and will report to the Second World Climate Conference in 1990. The United Nations has launched a major study, which will address several key environmental issues, including its link with development. Moreover, United Nations agencies are now pressing vigorously to integrate environment and natural resources protection into development programmes.

Nevertheless, much still remains to be done. It is imperative that Member States frame co-ordinated plans of international action that will ease and gradually resolve the crisis. The responsibility, of course, is shared by all countries; but the industrialized countries have a special obligation to check and mitigate the damage caused to the global environment and to assist the developing countries in achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development. There is also the need to address the question of the environment as a totality and to establish clear and equitable norms for the environmental behaviour of States through international law.

The proposed international conference on environment and development to be held in 1992, 20 years after the Stockholm Conference, will provide an occasion for developing a universal response in order to protect our planet for future generations. An opportunity lies here to redefine the relationship between man and nature and thus give a new turn to civilization.

## XI

The current rate of increase in the world's population has most disturbing implications for sustainable development

and social progress, especially in countries where larger increments still occur. Accompanying the explosive population growth is the rapid pace of urbanization in developing countries, making heavy demands on their ability to provide employment, housing, infrastructure and related services. One consequence is that the number of people living in absolute poverty, without adequate food or shelter, has increased at an alarming rate.

International efforts, including the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 43/181 of 20 December 1988, will be crucial in meeting the challenge posed by the present population growth rates and the destitution in which people are condemned to live. At a time of vast expansion in the world's total wealth, the hunger and homelessness of millions remain a rebuke to civilization.

## XII

Throughout the world the pace of social change has so accelerated that the pressures on individuals and on basic social institutions severely constrain the effective operation of the agencies of civil order. Frequent incidents of lawlessness cause widespread fear and, for the individual, a haunting sense of insecurity. This new generation of problems affects the growth and preservation of civil institutions and the process of development generally. Moreover, since they easily cross the boundaries of States, they affect the stability of international relations as well.

The internationalization of certain major social issues can, therefore, no longer be discounted. There is a growing realization that the social crisis affects all countries, even if in varying degrees, and that there is none among them which can regard itself as immune from danger. Essential as it is, therefore, jointly to devise and implement strategies to reduce and gradually to eliminate these new sources of disorder and potential conflict, it is also necessary to acknowledge that their roots lie deep in conditions of imbalance between the different components of society.

In recent years, the United Nations has been the catalyst for the adoption of a corpus of internationally agreed plans of action and guidelines that in fact provide the elements of a global social strategy. This encompasses the guiding principles for developmental social welfare policies and programmes, the strategies adopted at Nairobi for the advancement of women, global documents in the field of youth, disabled persons and aging, the results of the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, as well as the recommendations of the United Nations Congresses on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. Thus a set of principles and norms, together with operational guidelines, is at our disposal.

Drug abuse, the incidence of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and international crime have reached such proportions that a new sense of urgency is needed to deal with them. Each is of a nature that not even the most resourceful States can solve by themselves; each, therefore, underscores the need for nations to act in concert.

Illicit use and traffic of drugs is now recognized as a social plague afflicting both developed and developing countries. Although efforts to combat this scourge have intensified in recent years, estimates suggest that the monetary value of drug trafficking has recently surpassed that of international trade in oil and is second only to the

arms trade. It is a chastening observation that humanity is so deeply mired in the commerce of degradation and death.

The misery caused by drug addiction is immeasurable. Moreover, in a number of countries, the vast profits derived from this illicit production and traffic have the direct effect of making sections of local economies dependent on the trade and thus creating militant constituencies for its continuance. In some cases, administrative and judicial structures are being undermined to the extent of endangering political stability. Financial systems and banking institutions are frequently used to disguise vast sums acquired through drug trade and, in a number of developing countries, underground economies are expanded by its profits. There are also reported cases of collaboration between terrorists and those involved in drug trafficking in subverting civic peace. Indeed, the Government of a Member State has been confronted with an appalling situation: a cartel of drug dealers has openly embarked on armed conflict with it and, through assassinations and other terrorist acts, has tried to intimidate the body politic as a whole.

It is now generally recognized that both the supply of and the demand for drugs should be reduced and action should be taken to break the link between consumers and producers. A major step in this direction was taken in December 1988 with the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. The onus, of course, falls on Governments concerned to exercise the wide powers that the Convention vests in them and ensure that it is fully implemented. However, international understanding and co-ordination, together with increased resources, are indispensable in bringing this problem under control.

The United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control is working with other United Nations bodies and multilateral organizations to restrict cultivation of drug-producing crops and to stop trade in drugs through appropriate programmes, technical assistance and social measures taken largely at the community level. If decisive action is to be taken in solving the drug problem, it is essential that international support be available whenever and wherever requested. I would, therefore, appeal to all Member States to accede to the Convention and contribute generously to the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control.

A related and tragic social problem is the rapid spread of AIDS, with a clear upward trend in all regions. The World Health Organization (WHO) is leading the global effort on AIDS in collaboration with intergovernmental and other bodies. In over 150 countries, WHO is monitoring and evaluating national AIDS programmes, co-ordinating with relevant United Nations entities in addressing the practical issues involved.

The socio-economic and humanitarian aspects of the AIDS pandemic must also be addressed. In response to General Assembly resolution 43.15 of 27 October 1988, I have sought to ensure a co-ordinated system-wide approach through the establishment of the United Nations inter-agency advisory group on AIDS and focal points have been created in all relevant United Nations entities.

The rising crime rate, particularly in its transnational and organized forms, has also become a threat to global society as a whole. The menace cannot be overcome without full co-operation on a multilateral basis. There is need for Governments to co-ordinate the relevant policies and judicial procedures and co-operate in law enforcement.

Preparations are under way for a United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders next year. It is not beyond the combined capacities of Governments to ensure that no corner of the globe will serve as sanctuary for the perpetrators of international crime nor any laxity in vigilance afford them the impunity of which they have been taking advantage so far.

Though there is world-wide concern about the use of narcotics and the incidence of crime, particularly in their international aspects, additional factors cause major social upheavals in many developing countries. The mass migrations due to hunger and natural and man-made disasters tell their own tale of human distress. The quest for global tranquillity will lack balance if the problem of the displacement of an untold number of human beings is not addressed with the sense of urgency it deserves.

### XIII

The large number of refugees and displaced persons around the world continues to be a sombre commentary on the present state of affairs. While several important advances have been made in addressing and resolving the problems of refugees, asylum-seekers and related humanitarian categories, other developments are posing difficult new challenges. In seeking to meet those challenges, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) takes the lead in working closely with other United Nations entities such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) in order to assure a co-ordinated and timely response.

The world's largest single refugee group is the Afghans, who have yet to be repatriated on a large scale. Such repatriation over the past year has occurred largely in Africa, where large numbers of refugees from several countries have returned home. UNHCR is currently overseeing the organized return of several thousand Namibian refugees. Assistance has also been planned for the repatriation of refugees in South-East Asia and Central America.

More States have acceded to the major international and regional instruments on refugees. However, this further validation of the international humanitarian law of refugees was offset by an increase in unilateral measures by States that has not only worsened the plight of asylum-seekers and refugees, but even poses a threat to the humanitarian institution of asylum.

I have been particularly concerned with the complex emergency situations that have developed in Africa as a result of severe civil conflicts often compounded by other factors. These situations generally exceed the response capacity of any single agency or organization of the United Nations system and require co-ordinated action by several of these entities. Complex emergency situations lead to large-scale internal displacement in addition to the exodus of people to countries that are themselves, in many cases, among the least developed.

In response to requests from affected Governments, I have organized inter-agency missions on several occasions to help assess the scope of humanitarian and rehabilitation needs for their particular situations. The final reports of such missions provide the basis for launching appeals to the

international donor community for urgent assistance. During the past year I have, *inter alia*, appealed to Member States to support emergency humanitarian and rehabilitation programmes for Burundi, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal, Somalia and the Sudan.

Natural disasters are too frequently a cause of human loss, economic and social hardship. In recognition of the importance of international efforts in early warning and disaster relief, the General Assembly has designated the 1990s as an International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. It is hoped that this will enhance the ability of the international community to answer situations of human distress due to causes beyond human control.

### XIV

The administrative and financial situation of the Organization differs significantly from previous years. This is because of the impact of administrative reform, the addition of major new peace-keeping responsibilities and the continuing financial crisis.

The programme of administrative reforms initiated in 1986, based on the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, has been largely implemented. However, administrative reform is essentially a continuing process. The reforms have unquestionably produced a leaner and, in many ways, a more efficient Secretariat. Staff reductions undertaken since 1986 are now nearing the recommended target of 15 per cent. Unfortunately, in several areas, the capacity of the Secretariat to fulfil its tasks is already under considerable strain. In view of additional responsibilities placed on the Secretariat, it may well be necessary to limit the cuts to the level already attained. Several offices have been restructured in order to provide a more effective response to new demands while also adjusting to continuing constraints on available resources. Management information systems and the introduction of new technologies have yielded benefits in substantive, conference and administrative services.

Despite these changes, other factors have detracted from their potential net benefit. Although the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts envisaged less demand for conference and documentation services owing to the reductions and reforms, such a decrease has not occurred. Few bodies have decided to schedule biennial rather than annual meetings, or to reduce the duration of their sessions. As a result, the calendar of meetings is not significantly different this year from 1986, before the reform process began.

The mounting of 4 new peace-keeping operations in 1988-1989, as against 13 operations over the previous 40 years, and the planning of others have stretched to the limit the human and financial resources of the Organization. The demands on the Secretariat for additional services required a re-examination of programme priorities following on reform. In this context, I wish to mention that the staff as a whole have responded to this challenge with unfailing devotion to the mandate of the Organization. Many staff members have volunteered for service in overseas missions, fully aware of the personal sacrifice or physical hardship involved. Their enthusiasm and dedication to the realization of the goals of the United Nations provide a living testament



to the vibrancy of international co-operation and multilateralism. On a recent visit to Namibia, I was deeply moved to see personnel drawn from as many as 109 States serving together under the flag of the United Nations with the single purpose of bringing that country to independence in the manner laid down by the Security Council.

The United Nations is now at the forefront of international efforts in a variety of areas. Demand for additional operations is likely in the coming months; these will entail more expense. At a time when the Organization continues to be short of funds, it is imperative that Governments ensure the regular and timely payment of their dues. However, the present financial position is not reassuring. As at 31 August, outstanding contributions to the regular budget exceeded \$688 million, out of which \$347 million were owed for the current year and \$341 million for earlier years. For peace-keeping operations, the arrears totalled \$661 million. All outstanding contributions thus amounted to \$1,349 million. Only with a secure financial foundation can the Secretariat respond to requests for assistance with the speed and the resources requisite to a particular situation. It is high time that the United Nations is able to leave its financial worries behind.

In this context, it must also be recognized that the employment of the staff so as to secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity is an obligation under the Charter. The erosion of the conditions of service has made it increasingly difficult to comply with this requirement and to attract and retain staff with the necessary qualifications. The International Civil Service Commission has undertaken a comprehensive review of this situation and its findings will be presented to the Assembly.

The security of international civil servants also remains a cause of anxiety. There is an urgent need to ensure that the Organization is able to discharge its responsibilities without having the safety and sometimes the lives of its personnel endangered while serving in the field. I would urge Governments of all Member States to extend to them not only the protection that they need but also the treatment to which they are entitled by virtue of their being servants of all. The terms of service and the security of the staff are, I believe, matters of great importance for the Organization as a whole.

## XV

The present report began with a retrospective glance at the different phases of international relations prior to the one ushered in only recently. I believe that the way public attitudes with regard to peace have varied and evolved through all these phases deserves to be borne in mind at this time when we may be witnessing a new turn in international affairs.

At the time the Charter of the United Nations was adopted, there was a sense of a new beginning around the world. For the first time in history, the prospect of the banishment of war from international relations ceased to look utopian. This evoked a kind of enthusiasm that had never been experienced before.

But the optimism was soon dispelled by the discord between the principal architects of the world Organization and the consequent impasse on all major questions of international peace and security. The world did escape


another global war but the balance of terror between the major nuclear-weapon Powers provided no reliable insurance against the danger and little comfort to those outside the great-Power equation. There was no shortage of the rhetoric of peace but doubts grew as to whether war was a totally unacceptable option. A fearful, fatalistic sense attended an unending arms race.

This sense of a loss of purpose lasted for decades. Now that it has begun to lighten, there is a return to the earlier hope that had greeted the birth of the world Organization, but a hope tempered by a firmer sense of realities. When people think better of the United Nations and when it succeeds in its efforts, they are more hopeful about peace; the reverse also holds. This is borne out by all indications of opinion around the world. If anything is clear in the present situation, it is that war and the preparations for war have dwindling constituencies, while peace has a growing one.

For the size and strength of the constituency of peace, a great deal of credit is due to non-governmental organizations around the world. Their tireless work in many vital areas has complemented and supported the efforts of the United Nations.

But the noticeable improvement in public perceptions of the Organization intensifies an obligation—the obligation to avert another crisis of confidence. I am certain that, given the necessary support from Member States, the Secretariat of the Organization will respond fully to whatever calls are made upon it. However, its capabilities will be best employed if the Organization as a whole is used more purposefully by its Member States than it was in the recent past. The decision-making process on political matters has vastly improved with the emergence of a collegial spirit among the permanent members of the Security Council and with the daily co-operation between the Council as a whole and the Secretary-General. While this no doubt satisfies a basic condition for successful action, the changing times demand more. Agreement among the major Powers must carry with it the support of a majority of Member States if it is to make the desired impact on the world situation.

We will soon be entering a new decade. This, of course, means little by itself but not many decades can have opened at truly historic points. The present is such a point. There is a ubiquitous desire to turn over a new leaf, to try innovative approaches for the solution of old problems. In diverse regions, there is weariness with wars and there is recognition of their futility. Nor do the postures of hostile competition have the appeal to public opinion that they unfortunately exerted not too long ago. Instead, it is the combat against the causes of conflict, the struggle against economic inequities, and social evils and the degradation of the environment that must evoke all the courage and determination of battle. Obstacles to stable peace and balanced progress are many and the world's political, intellectual and moral imagination will need to be fully employed in overcoming them. The United Nations stands ready as the instrument for the effort.



JAVIER PÉREZ DE CUÉLLAR  
Secretary-General

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