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ON THE
WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION

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

We face today a world of almost infinite promise which is also a world of potentially terminal danger. The choice between these alternatives is ours. The question is whether the Governments and peoples of the world are capable, without the spur of further disasters, of together making the right choice; for the choice and its implementation will, in many important ways, have to be collective. I believe that the United Nations and the way in which its Members decide to use it is—and will be—an essential element in this historic choice. The question I shall consider in my annual report on this fortieth anniversary of our Organization is, therefore, not so much the future of the United Nations as the future of humanity and of our planet and the role of the United Nations in that future.

The world which confronts us would certainly surprise the statesmen who produced the Charter of the United Nations 40 years ago. In those 40 years vast and fundamental changes have occurred in the map of our world and our scientific understanding of it, in international relations, in the nature of war and in the way we live. We are all, in one way or another, engaged in a search for new landmarks, better systems and effective adjustments.

We are living in a time of flux and uncertainty. This situation becomes particularly clear when the world is suddenly faced with a desperate problem, be it a new conflict, a great humanitarian disaster or the temporary paralysis caused by a premeditated act of violence.

There can be no question that, at the global level, between the poles of the massive and sophisticated nuclear weaponry of the major Powers and the desperation of the underprivileged or the dispossessed, there often lies a great vacuum of legitimacy and respected authority. Our most urgent challenge is to fill that vacuum through determined efforts to build a working international political system in which all participate—a system which not only will guarantee survival and order, but will make our planet run more evenly in the interests of all of its inhabitants.

It seems to me important to examine the concept of international authority, a concept which remains elusive in the present world. The only authority that existed in international affairs before the founding of the League of Nations and its successor, the United Nations, was the actual power of the strongest States or Empires. It was mainly the abuse of this power which led to two world wars in this century. It was to replace this state of affairs that the United Nations was founded. The founding of the United Nations, President Roosevelt stated after the Crimean Conference, "spells—and it ought to spell—the end of the system of unilateral action, 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".

What has happened since falls far short of that vision. It is certainly true that the two world wars, and the immense changes of the past 40 years, have clearly shown that the world cannot return to its old ways and that the system set forth in the Charter is a logical answer to the question of the maintenance of international peace and security and the joint promotion of economic development and social progress in the actual circumstances of our time. But the fact is that we have so far failed to achieve the political conditions, and in particular the requisite relationships among the most powerful States, in which this noble concept can be made to function for the benefit of all.

An illustration of this issue is the current difficulty in addressing the problem of terrorism. Much of the public discussion of this problem seems to assume that there are no existing international conventions on the subject. I need only mention here the three conventions adopted under the auspices of the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, adopted by the General Assembly in 1979, as providing at least some legal framework for much more effective action in combating hijacking and hostage-taking. The difficulty that does arise is the incapacity, or the unwillingness, of Governments to implement these conventions in specific cases. Once again the essential political conditions, the sense of solidarity and mutual confidence, that could make international instruments *work* is largely lacking.

The best place where those conditions could be cultivated and a sense of international solidarity developed is the United Nations. Indeed, that was one of the main original purposes of the Organization. Only when the minimum positive conditions exist in the relations between States will the concept of international authority begin to assume its rightful place in human affairs.

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The United Nations cannot—and was not intended to—solve *all* the problems of the international community, but it is the best place to avoid the worst and to strive for improvement. And it *has* made a good start—far better, in fact, than is often recognized. Let me briefly substantiate this assertion.

After 40 years we have, for the first time in history, a virtually universal world Organization. We have, also for the first time in history, a world of independent sovereign States. Although there have been all too many conflicts since 1945, we have so far escaped a third world war and have perhaps learned more than we realize about techniques and expedients for avoiding such a terminal disaster. We have achieved unprecedented economic growth and social progress, in which developing countries have shared, although not yet in sufficient measure. We are making collective efforts to respond to the new generation of global problems which mostly stem from the need to protect the planet and its resources while providing for all of its people. There is a greater international responsiveness to humanitarian challenges wherever they occur. The protection of human rights, for all the violations that still persist, is becoming a world-wide concern. More international law affecting virtually all areas of human activity has been codified in the past 40 years than in all the previous years of recorded history. Much of it has been done under the auspices of the General Assembly.

The world is still, admittedly, a very imperfect, insecure, unjust, dangerous and, in all too many regions, impoverished place, but in the achievements I have mentioned above—and in many others—we have a foundation to build on. It is mainly up to Governments to decide if they wish to co-operate in building on this foundation a useful, coherent, effective institution, or whether they choose the alternative that may sometimes seem easier in the short run, each

taking its own short-sighted and self-interested course. In that case, the promising foundations, established with so much thought and hard work, will end up surmounted by a rambling, contentious slum, the breeding ground of endless new troubles and disasters. Surely the first alternative is the one which must be chosen.

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There are two basic functions which make the United Nations an essential enterprise. The first is to provide an instrument through which a collective effort can be made to meet emergencies and deal with current problems. These vary from international conflicts, through disputes among States, to humanitarian emergencies and sudden economic and social crises affecting millions of people.

The second function is of a more long-term nature and is related to the complex phase of political and economic development in which our world now finds itself. Throughout history there has been a natural political progression from small groups to larger ones—from family to tribe, to town, to city, to province, to nation state. This progression has taken place more or less spontaneously at different times in different regions, as economic life has become more complex, specialized and interdependent. Thus we have arrived at a world which is almost entirely composed of nation states. The sovereign independent State is the largest political entity and the main unit of the structure of the United Nations.

There are now, however, a number of problems and realities with which only a larger unity can effectively deal and where the requisite security or common interest can only be achieved through a collective effort of sovereign States. Many of these problems lend themselves best to subregional or regional co-operation in groups of nations with common interests, but many others already transcend the regional dimension. We have, whether we like it or not, created a world which is in many respects one world. On some major problems affecting all humanity we have reached a global stage where interdependence is a fact of life.

A basic role of the United Nations, therefore, is to serve as the foundation on which to build the international system of the future, a system fully recognizing national sovereignty but also recognizing that some of our present realities and concerns call urgently for something more.

Anyone who contemplates the prospects for the future of humanity must conclude that the two functions to which I have referred will become increasingly urgent, perhaps even indispensable to survival. In the 40 years since 1945 the population of the world has more than doubled. In the next 15 years it will increase by one third. Some of the strains and stresses in the world community will certainly stem from the pressure on institutions and resources resulting from this population explosion.

But we must also consider the many precarious balances of the claims and ambitions of nations: the unresolved disputes we carry with us into the future; the many smouldering conflicts of ideas, beliefs and interests in this world; the dizzy pace of the technological revolution both in production and in weapons; the widening gulf between abundance and absolute poverty; the web of economic ties which locks all parts of the world together; and the steadily increasing danger of deep harm to the biosphere on which life depends. Such a list—and it could easily be made longer—makes it clear that international co-operation, however complex and difficult to organize, is not a choice for the nations of the world, but a necessity.

However, if the United Nations is fully to play the role I have indicated in the development of the international system, it has to become a more effective institution. I should like to discuss this problem in the context of the principal responsibilities laid down in the Charter.

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In terms of its first basic function of meeting emergencies and dealing with current problems, the maintenance of international peace and security is the primary purpose of the United Nations. In the minds of the writers of the Charter it was closely linked with progress in arms limitation and disarmament. Indeed, Article 26 of the Charter gives the Security Council a leading role in the establishment of a system for the regulation of armaments.

Forty years ago, with the lessons of the disastrous period leading up to the Second World War still vividly in mind, it was concluded that the old idea of achieving national security through a competitive armaments race led only to increasing general insecurity. That concept was therefore to be replaced by a collective system of international peace and security, involving in particular the most powerful nations, which would play a key role in the United Nations Security Council. In carrying out its duties the Security Council would, if necessary, and with the support of its members, use the whole range of measures set out in Chapters VI and VII of the Charter. With such a system in place and respected, it was believed that arms limitation and disarmament would naturally follow.

This noble and logical concept has not been realized for many practical and political reasons, not least the lack of that unanimity of the permanent members which was to have been its main driving force. How has the United Nations reacted to the problems posed by the absence of the key prerequisite of its system of international peace and security?

Obviously where international peace is concerned, the ultimate priority is the avoidance of a global conflagration. That is, of course, a main concern of the nuclear Powers themselves, but great dangers remain for all. These include accident, misapprehension or an unexpected concatenation of events involving the nuclear Powers in a way which they cannot evade. This latter situation could most likely develop from the escalation of a regional conflict.

If this brief analysis is valid, insurance against nuclear war requires measures to slow down the onrush of events in such a way as to allow Governments not to take irrevocable decisions and to gain time by substituting deliberation for force. Such expedients also include formulas which allow Governments to change policies that are bound to lead to confrontation. They include stabilizing mechanisms and negotiating processes by which crucial conflicts, if they cannot be resolved, can at least be contained and prevented from escalating. In the case of regional conflicts, especially in sensitive areas, forms of conflict control are often desirable. And overall, a central forum where opposing views can be freely expressed and third-party assistance is available is an important part of keeping the peace.

The Security Council has time and again slowed the onrush of events, gained time for vital changes in direction, produced face-saving mechanisms and substituted talk for violent action. It has striven for cease-fires and truces to prepare the way for negotiation. It has set important guidelines for the solution of complex problems and provided, with the co-operation of the Secretary-General, all manner of forms of conciliation, mediation, good offices, fact-finding, truce observation and quiet diplomacy. It has managed often to isolate regional conflicts from the area of confrontation of the nuclear Powers. It has provided a repository for the most

dangerous of problems even though it could not solve them. It has frequently provided the framework for important combinations of bilateral and multilateral effort. It has acted as a safety net, a last resort to be used by Governments as the alternative to falling into the abyss of unconfined war. Finally, in the absence of the political conditions in which Chapter VII could be used, a system of conflict control has been pioneered, now known as peace-keeping, which has shown considerable promise and effectiveness in 13 separate operations.

Succeeding Secretaries-General have been intensively involved in all these efforts, and the role of the Secretary-General in peace and security matters has developed accordingly. I shall be dealing with this subject later on in relation to the future.

In a changeable and often unfavourable international climate, I believe the Council's record in its primary task stands up better and is a good deal more central and relevant than is sometimes recognized. Of course it is in no way up to the expectations of a chastened but hopeful world 40 years ago, and it does not include a full and effective use of the range of actions suggested by the Charter. But in the unfavourable political conditions in which the Security Council has mostly had to operate, it represents a considerable effort to find alternative ways for the maintenance of peace.

There is no denying that in the present circumstances the peace and security system of the United Nations has many weaknesses and many shortcomings. It suffers from lack of unanimity and collegial spirit in the Security Council. It suffers from a lack of respect for, and failure to co-operate with, the Council's decisions. It often suffers from a reluctance to pre-empt, or even to foresee, dangerous situations and to use the powers of the Council at a stage when problems might be more susceptible of treatment. It suffers from the Council's incapacity to approach some problems at all. But I maintain that in the real conditions of international life these 40 years—as opposed to various rhetorical versions of the same events—the Security Council has played an essential and often central role in providing stability and limiting conflict.

The question is how to enhance that role and bring the Council closer to the position prescribed for it in the Charter. It would obviously be extremely desirable to see that change in relationships among the permanent members that above all might restore the Council to the position it was originally intended to occupy. But surely, in the mean while, there are ways in which the Council could improve its capacity along the lines on which it has been working for many years.

In my previous annual reports, and especially in the report for 1982, I have made a number of suggestions on this score. I shall not repeat such suggestions here, although I hope that Governments will see fit to act on some of them. On the occasion of the fortieth anniversary, however, I shall make a simpler set of suggestions.

First, I would suggest that a determined and conscious effort be made by members of the Security Council, and especially the permanent members, to use their membership to make the Council more the guardian of peace it was set up to be and less the battleground on which to fight out political and ideological differences which are not directly relevant to the issue under discussion—in other words, to give matters of international peace and security priority over bilateral differences.

Secondly, I suggest that the Security Council should, in the near future, make a deliberate and concerted effort to solve one or two of the major problems before it by making fuller use of the measures available to it under the Charter.

Thirdly, the membership as a whole might reaffirm Charter obligations, especially those relating to the non-use of force or the threat of force, the peaceful settlement of disputes, resort to the mechanism set out in the Charter for the settlement of disputes and respect for the decisions of the Security Council.

In the present circumstances these suggestions may to some seem simplistic. But in our nuclear age there is nothing more dangerous than failing to make the collective system of international peace and security *work.* The United Nations is in no way a super-State. It is an organization of sovereign independent States. The Organization has no sovereignty of its own. Sovereignty remains entirely vested in the individual Member States unless they decide otherwise. The Organization's function, and hence that of the Secretary-General, is therefore to harmonize, to encourage and to initiate. But the implementation, the drive, must come from the Members. When this drive does come, it can achieve remarkable results. I would like to see this drive, this collective will, directed to the key function of the United Nations, the maintenance of international peace and security. Next year, 1986, has been designated the International Year of Peace. Let us try to make this designation a call for serious reflection and action.

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Without collective determination and the acknowledgement of a minimum common interest in survival, there can be no meaningful progress in disarmament. International insecurity and the arms race, with the fear of its possible extension to new areas, create a relentless vicious spiral. Where the arms race is concerned, it cannot be sufficiently emphasized that the quest for advantage is illusory. In the nuclear era it also places all people at risk and puts in doubt the lives of future generations.

Governments have to find the courage to take the first steps. We should recall the vision that led to such advances as the Partial Test-Ban Treaty some 20 years ago. Today, a clear and vital signal of humanity's willingness to confront the nuclear challenge would be through agreement on a comprehensive test-ban treaty. Impeding as it would the ceaseless technological refinement of nuclear weapons, its adoption would help to break the sequence that threatens our very existence. There are other areas deserving of urgent attention—nuclear-weapon-free zones, for example.

While the fear of nuclear weapons is pervasive because of their potentially global devastating effects, it is conventional weapons that every day claim countless lives. Those who engage in and fuel the arms trade bear a particularly heavy responsibility. The conventional arms race, moreover, squanders precious economic resources. We must push for practical measures for multilateral disarmament, including regional plans, bearing in mind the link between disarmament and development.

Bilateral negotiations between the great Powers are clearly of crucial importance to the future of all peoples as well as their own. In this connection, I am sure that we all share the profound hope that the forthcoming meeting between the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States will contribute to a reduction of tension and to progress on disarmament, as well as on other important matters.

At the same time, I wish to emphasize that the United Nations can and must contribute to progress in disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament affords a unique multilateral arena for discussions on arms limitation and disarmament. Indeed the Organization has a comprehensive responsibility

for restraining dangerous trends in this field—for example, in regard to chemical weapons.

I believe that the Organization's ability to assist in verification and compliance arrangements should also be actively explored. The International Atomic Energy Agency has unique experience in monitoring non-proliferation compliance and ensuring the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. This expertise could be built on and expanded to provide a monitoring capability for nuclear-arms agreements. Suggestions have also been made, and should be further considered, for the United Nations to verify compliance through seismic stations, through on-site inspection or through satellite observation.

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Many of the greatest hopes of mankind focus on economic and social progress, which must remain a primary goal of the United Nations system. Much progress has been made in the past 40 years, but many worries and uncertainties now prevail about risks of stagnation or even regression in some parts of the world.

There is no denying that for some time now the world economy has been functioning in an uneven and unsatisfactory way. In industrial countries the wave of high technology promises great affluence but also causes overcapacity, obsolescence and unemployment. Many developing countries, apart from basic problems of development, are crippled by their debt burdens which have been compounded by the rise in international interest rates. But all these difficulties, which are these days often euphemistically described as adjustment problems, seem to be part of one great process of global adjustment which is made rather more difficult by the inclination of many countries to resort to protectionism or unilateral exchange rate policies to solve their own problems at the expense of other countries.

It was this kind of short-sighted economic nationalism that brought the world economy to a collapse in the 1930s. This was why, along with the foundation of the United Nations, a great effort was made to set up a system of specialized organizations in the areas of money, finance and trade.

The deliberations in the United Nations on world economic affairs are seldom conducted among those who are ultimately responsible for these issues within their own Governments. Finance ministries and central banks are represented in other international forums, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, whose functions are exclusively the consideration of economic, financial and monetary issues.

And yet it has become increasingly clear in recent years that economic, financial, monetary and trade issues are so interrelated and are of such profound political and social importance that they can only be dealt with effectively as part of a wider political process. In the case of international development this was recognized in the creation of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development as well as the call for a new international economic order, but it is now true of an even broader range of issues. This development must be reflected in the approach of the United Nations and in the nature of governmental representation in it if the efforts on problems which affect virtually all humanity are to be relevant and well conceived.

The need for international co-operation in economic affairs more and more cuts across traditional sectoral boundaries as represented nationally by different ministries and internationally by different specialized agencies. What is required in many cases is a more effective and pragmatic use of the United Nations as a forum for integrating practical effort. This in no sense detracts from the importance of the work of the specialized agencies—on the contrary, it should enhance their effectiveness and relevance. A parallel co-ordinating effort is necessary at the national level. There is a need for governmental ministries to act in concert with each other towards agreed objectives, if the international system is to perform effectively.

The Economic and Social Council should have a useful function to serve in exploring new needs and opportunities for joint international action. An effort is being made by its members to make the Council more effective, and by the Secretariat to enhance the quality of support. While some progress has been made, much remains to be done if the Council is to fulfil the great task allotted to it in the Charter and to indicate with clarity the directions and the spirit in which we should all act together.

We are facing economic changes of such magnitude and complexity that no country can adjust to them in isolation. We see this, for example, in attempts to protect domestic jobs from import competition, which result in the exporting of unemployment. What is clearly required is a wider vision and more dynamic understanding of the global nature of the problems we are facing. Such a vision has to be based on the open recognition of interdependence and the practical necessity of a fair sharing of burdens and of the accommodation of others. The ultimate rewards of such a system, for example, fuller use of resources, less unemployment and greater economic efficiency and social justice, would be immense. Unfortunately, the difficulty of getting such an approach generally accepted is also immense.

The international debt situation is particularly alarming. Many of the debtor countries are now again facing very weak export markets. Commodity prices are lower in real terms than they have been since the 1930s and are still declining. But interest rates remain high, and there seems to be no tendency for new lending to resume; if anything, the opposite. To adjust to the drying-up of bank lending, many debtor countries are cutting their imports, their living standards and their development programmes to the point where social, and even political, consequences have become extremely serious. Furthermore, the loss of markets weakens the fragile recovery in the industrial countries.

There is a strong mutual interest in resolving the debt crisis. However, the debt problem illustrates the inconsistencies which short-circuit attempts to move in a positive direction. While efforts are being made to reschedule debts over longer periods to alleviate the burdens, elsewhere protectionist measures are being taken which nullify those efforts. I see a strong need for a joint, comprehensive and speedy examination of all aspects of this situation, including the political ones.

The promotion of better understanding of world economic and social problems is an essential task of the United Nations and other international agencies. There are some encouraging experiences in this field. The series of conferences on global problems sponsored by the United Nations over the past 15 years has certainly been an innovation in raising knowledge and consciousness of problems and trying to develop a concerted approach to them. Current international efforts to come to grips with the problems of Africa also show a willingness to apply the skill and resources of the international community to a particular series of problems.

In the economic as in the political sphere, we are faced with the necessity of making our institutions relevant and effective in the realities of our time. We have to learn to manage our increasing economic interdependence. This is an enormous and daunting task. But the failure to face up to it can have results in terms of economic and social decline and chaos, which, in their own way and in the circumstances of

our time, can be just as serious and debilitating as a failure to evolve a collective system of international peace and security in a nuclear age.

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Today international co-operation is recognized as indispensable even in matters where not long ago it was thought to be Utopian. In social and economic development, the achievements of United Nations programmes and agencies are universally recognized. The force of necessity has made the United Nations system a global source of advice and assistance, co-operation and co-ordination in all areas where Governments, whatever their philosophical differences, have to act together.

It is ironic that, as we enter a phase in history in which the practical necessity of co-operative internationalism is so patent, there should, in some quarters at least, be a retreat from it. Questioning of international organizations striving to create greater order in the world polity and economy is widespread, and the United Nations is the subject of especially heavy criticism. We need to examine this phenomenon and try to understand it. Surely the fortieth anniversary is a good time to take a collective look at this problem and the role of Member States in addressing it.

There is no question that the difficulties of making the United Nations work to their satisfaction has an important bearing on the attitude of some Governments towards the Organization. Certainly the new complexity of the expanded membership and new voting patterns, as well as instances where division and conflict have been highlighted at the expense of broad areas of agreement and common interest, have had an impact. In these circumstances there has been a tendency to make the United Nations a scapegoat for current problems and confusions and to see it as the symbol of a lack of international authority and responsibility, rather than as an instrument for co-operation in addressing the current problems of a newly global society.

It is the General Assembly, the main representative organ of the United Nations, which inevitably carries the weight of much of the criticism of the United Nations. Only in the General Assembly can the world be seen in its full variety, and it is there that differences and conflicts are highlighted in a particularly dramatic way. The General Assembly, when all is said and done, is the first approximation of a town meeting of the world. Far less well known is the painstaking work carried on within the framework of the Assembly in codifying international law and standards of behaviour and in focusing and maintaining attention on vital issues.

Many efforts have been made over the years to reform the General Assembly and to streamline and rationalize its procedures. The truth is that the Assembly represents the universality of the membership and has a very broad and diverse agenda. It is therefore difficult to streamline it without losing its main point. There are certainly, however, ways in which the performance of the General Assembly could be progressively improved.

It seems to me that essential steps in improving the political process in the General Assembly should include a much greater degree of intergovernmental consultation before each session, and a determined attempt to hammer out consensus on important issues and to avoid divisive rhetoric. Otherwise the quality of the political process in the General Assembly will deteriorate.

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The responsibilities and duties which are inherent in the functions of the Secretary-General or are delegated to him represent a high challenge. The functions of the Secretary-General and the Secretariat have evolved to a notable extent in the first 40 years of the Organization. Both are based on the concept of independent and objective international service.

I wish only to make one observation about the evolution of the Secretary-Generalship and its relation to the overall development of international institutions. While greatly appreciative of the co-operation and understanding extended to the Secretary-General and the trust bestowed on him, I am sometimes concerned that the delegation of responsibility to the Secretary-General may, in certain instances, have the effect of diminishing the effort that is expected of Member States under the Charter. This will not serve the effective development of the United Nations as a political institution.

That being said, I nevertheless believe that it would be in the interests of the Organization as a whole if the Secretary-General's capacity to serve as an objective third party were to be further developed. There is much, of course, to be said for quiet diplomacy, but sometimes more is required. I am thinking in particular of a wider and earlier use of fact-finding and observation. I am also thinking of the need to survey more regularly and systematically the world-wide state of international peace and security—a task in which the Security Council and the Secretary-General should be jointly involved. The best radar in the world is not reliable or effective unless it makes systematic surveys of the surrounding space. The same applies, it seems to me, to the task of maintaining international peace.

The basic elements of the international civil service—independence from national pressures, efficiency, competence and integrity—must remain the guiding tenets of the Secretariat. Their validity has been proven over the years, especially in critical and controversial situations. The Secretariat must continually strive to be the dependable arm required to implement the evolving needs of the Organization.

I am, however, concerned with the question of what policies and methods can best achieve the standards of efficiency and integrity which are required for the international civil service. The development of such a service using personnel from well over 100 Member States is no easy task. I am certainly not satisfied that we have in all cases found the right solutions, the right rules or the most effective organization for the Secretariat. I am in favour of pursuing our efforts to improve the existing administrative, personnel and budgetary practices of the United Nations. However, I believe that the best results can, and should, be achieved within the framework of the Secretary-General's authority under Chapter XV of the Charter. This is essential both for proper management and in the interests of the Organization as a whole.

I have repeatedly emphasized the need for the Secretariat to explore all avenues for utilizing the Organization's resources in the most efficient manner, and to provide an equitable role for women in the Secretariat. I have initiated a series of management-improving measures, and this is a process that will be pursued on a continuing basis. It is particularly essential, in times of change, constantly to evaluate and reassess programmes and structures and to institute such reforms as may be required.

In the preparation of my proposals for the current and forthcoming biennial programme budgets, I have endeavoured to reassure all Member States of my commitment to achieve the delivery of programmes entrusted to the Secretariat in the most cost-effective way possible. I am bound, however, to express my deep concern at the practice of certain Member

States of selectively withholding their duly assessed contributions. This can only have a most detrimental effect on the future viability of our Organization.

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In thinking of the future of the Organization, one is struck by the fact that the United Nations is almost unique among political institutions in having little direct contact with its basic constituency, "the peoples of the United Nations" who address us in the first words of the Charter. This is a delicate matter, since the independent national sovereignty of Member States is a primary prerequisite of the Charter.

Nevertheless the United Nations deals with more and more issues which are important internationally and also have strong domestic implications. Only the support of national domestic constituencies in each Member State can assure the necessary follow-up which will lead to effective action on such issues. Here a far greater involvement with non-governmental organizations in the broadest sense of the term could go a long way towards a solution. We have had an indication of their enormous direct value and influence in a series of global conferences as well as in the remarkable world-wide efforts by voluntary agencies, entertainers and others in support of relief in Africa and elsewhere.

We also need to encourage the concept of practical international service in a manner broader and more systematic than has yet been the case. In particular more effort should be made to devise ways of engaging young people directly in matters of concern to the world community.

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I have, in a series of other reports to the General Assembly and the Security Council, commented in detail on the major political issues with which the United Nations is concerned, in many of which the Secretary-General has particular responsibilities. I shall not, therefore, repeat myself here or deal with the specific situations covered by those reports.

I should like, however, to mention certain other great issues of our time which have an important bearing on the future. Perhaps the broadest and most complex of these issues is the question of human rights, which affects everyone.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted nearly 37 years ago, must be counted as one of the great achievements of the United Nations. The Declaration and the Covenants and conventions that grew out of it provided the world, for the first time, with an international code of human rights which establishes as norms of international law the way in which the State must treat individuals. Specific mechanisms have also been established by the United Nations to monitor compliance with these agreements, and we are increasingly providing advisory services and technical assistance to Governments in the field of human rights.

Yet we must recognize that, despite these advances, there is a continuing need to keep a close watch over the way the rights and freedoms of the individual are respected by States. Massive violations of human rights continue to take place, often of tragic proportions. Many States have not yet ratified the relevant international conventions, or brought their laws or institutions into conformity with the international standards proclaimed by the United Nations. Persecution for political, religious or racial reasons continues. Minorities and indigenous populations are often inadequately protected. There are also instances in which the co-operation of Governments with the United Nations and its organs leaves much to be desired.

Let us in this fortieth anniversary year rededicate ourselves, jointly and individually, to the task of achieving the unimpeded application of the Universal Declaration and the International Covenants. To this end, I appeal to those States that have not yet ratified the Covenants to do so. I appeal to *all* States to support, strengthen and take part in the procedures which have been established to examine violations of human rights, and assure their protection.

A particularly important aspect of human rights is racial discrimination, which should have no place in any form in our society and which represents the most dangerous of social and political poisons. In one particular and extreme instance, the policy of *apartheid* in South Africa, the unwillingness to undertake timely, remedial measures has now produced an ominous and violent situation, on which the Security Council has recently pronounced itself. I need hardly reiterate my strongly held views on the abhorrent system of *apartheid* and the massive human tragedy which has resulted from it. I hope that, even at this very late hour, steps can be taken and contacts established which may avert the worst. I feel obliged to add here that the failure to bring Namibia to independence through the United Nations Plan is, together with *apartheid*, a fundamental reason for the tension and suffering in southern Africa.

An immense and widespread social evil is the burgeoning problem of narcotic drugs, which ruins the lives of uncounted millions of individuals, and even undermines the integrity and stability of Governments. In large areas of the world the plague of drug abuse and illicit trafficking, fuelled by the immense profits which they generate, has reached an emergency stage. As this problem increases in magnitude, despite the growing efforts of Governments to deal with it, even more attention must be given to improving the co-ordination of efforts so that an effective range of strategies may be developed to meet the new challenges posed. Clearly, the drug problem can no longer be regarded as a merely social, and largely domestic, concern.

It is against this background that I have proposed that the first global conference should be convened to deal with all aspects of drug abuse and illicit trafficking. I trust that such a conference would be action-oriented. It should serve to raise the level of world-wide awareness of the escalating problems of drug abuse, mobilize the full potential of the United Nations system, and result in a programme of action at the international, regional and national levels. The moment has arrived for the international community to expand its efforts in a global undertaking to meet this deadly peril.

Acts of terrorism have now spread to virtually all parts of the globe. They are exceptionally difficult to cope with since they involve desperate acts by desperate people willing to violate national and international law regardless of the risk to their own lives. The most tragic aspect of this problem is the increasing loss of innocent civilian lives, which I have repeatedly condemned. As indicated earlier, some of the necessary international legal instruments are in place, and it is time for concerted efforts to be made by Governments to implement them. In this context, Governments may wish to consider what further measures of international co-operation could be effectively devised.

I believe that in concerting an international response to great common problems we may also begin to develop the kind of social and political solidarity and mutual confidence which will eventually serve well in the more traditional field of political problems. Several encouraging examples of such responses do exist, and I want to recall some of them very briefly:

International efforts for the relief of refugees and their voluntary return or resettlement represent one of the most

practical expressions of international solidarity;

The steps taken to create more adequate food security for all countries have brought us forward in the struggle to free the world from hunger;

The great endeavour to bring immunization to all children in the world by 1990 now seems capable of realization if there is a will to make the final effort. I urge the leaders of the world to give full support to this vital and universal enterprise with the potential for saving countless young lives.

In these fields and many others the range of the possible has steadily widened as international co-operation has taken its place as a permanent element in the governance of the world.

In another important instance, the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, which was held at Nairobi to review the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, completed its work with greater success than some had anticipated and, to my satisfaction, adopted by consensus an important set of propositions for the future. Evidently, the enormous importance of the subject finally carried the day. It is hard as yet to judge the full significance and impact of this dynamic and widely representative gathering. One thing is certain: the full and equal participation of women in all aspects of human endeavour, which throughout history has been obscured and suppressed, has assumed an importance and a vitality which can give an irresistible momentum to the various practical efforts by which the Nairobi Conference must be followed up. I hope it will also add a healthy new dimension to political thinking and action world-wide.

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I have previously mentioned international responsiveness to human disasters. Although the African continent today attracts our most urgent attention, the international community was slow to respond to the initial alarms signalling the drought-induced crises that were affecting several African nations. For many thousands of people, it responded too late.

But for the vast majority of the 30 million Africans who have suffered from the most widespread, devastating drought in memory, a unique partnership between the Governments of affected African countries and the international community has brought life and hope. This partnership has managed to arrest a disaster of unprecedented proportions that would otherwise have occurred and has almost certainly saved several million lives. The United Nations has played, and will in various ways continue to play, a central—indeed indispensable—role in this great example of international humanitarian co-operation.

Millions of Africans still face a difficult and uncertain future, a future which could be more hopeful if the partnership that has been forged in response to Africa's emergency needs is maintained through the critically important recovery period now at hand. We must be prepared to plan and carry through sustained development assistance programmes designed to prevent the recurrence of such tragedies and deal with their fundamental causes.

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In our journey of 40 years we have had many experiences, some encouraging, others frustrating, and many that have been deeply enlightening. We have taken on many activities and some excess baggage. In looking forward let us decide which activities are really useful and what baggage we can well do without.

Let us remember that we have created the means to destroy ourselves, and that a great effort of will and intelligence is going to be needed to build a system which will effectively preserve peace and which will work in the interests of all the peoples of this Earth. Let us look at the future as an opportunity, not as a potential disaster. Let us remember all the things we have in common as human beings, all the marvels that the human mind has created and all the splendid diversity of our world.

Let us above all, on this occasion, look at the United Nations as its founders looked at it, as the practical hope for the future and not merely as the unhappy bearer of the burdens of the past. We must be realistic about our difficulties and the dangers that we face. But let us also resolve to find the ways by which, together, we can surmount them.

Javier PÉREZ DE CUÉLLAR
Secretary-General