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PREPARATIONS FOR THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE UNITED NATIONS (1945-1985)

INTRODUCTION

1. In 1985, the United Nations is going to observe the fortieth anniversary of its establishment. Indeed, this Organization came into existence on 24 October 1945, when the Charter establishing it had been ratified by China, France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and other signatories from the 51 Member States which became known as the original Member States of the Organization. The United Nations was established as a successor to the League of Nations which came into existence 25 years earlier at the end of the First World War with the objective of promoting co-operation among nations and maintaining peace and security. But the incapacity of the League of Nations to fulfil the objective for which it was established and which resulted in the armed conflicts which devastated the world between 1939 and 1945 and known as the Second World War, led the Allied Powers from one consultation or conference to another between Dumbarton Oaks, Yalta and San Francisco to the final establishment of a new organization to be known as the United Nations, based on the vision shared by its 51 founding Member States "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind".

I. OBJECTIVES OF THE UNITED NATIONS

2. The objectives of the United Nations, as set forth in the Charter are:

- (a) To maintain international peace and security;
- (b) To develop friendly relations among nations;
- (c) To achieve international co-operation in solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems, and in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all;
- (d) To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in attaining these common ends.

II. MEMBERSHIP

3. Membership of the United Nations is open to all peace-loving nations which accept the obligations of the United Nations Charter and, in the judgment of the Organization, are able and willing to carry out these obligations. From the original number of 51 Member States in 1945, membership in the United Nations rose to 159 in 1985, as many countries formerly under colonial rule emerged into independence in the Organization's first 25 years of existence.

III. STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION

4. The Charter established six principal organs of the United Nations: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice and the Secretariat.

A. The General Assembly

5. The General Assembly is the main deliberative organ. It is composed of representatives of all Member States, each of which has one vote. The Assembly has the right to discuss and make recommendations on all matters within the scope of the Charter. It sets policies and determines programmes for the United Nations Secretariat. It guides activities and establishes goals for development, calls for world conferences on major issues and designates international years to focus attention on the needs and problems of a particular sector of human society, such as women and children. It also examines and makes recommendations on problems as diverse as the observance of human rights and the dangers of weapons of mass destruction. The Assembly, which occupies a central position in the United Nations, receives reports from all other organs, admits new Members, approves the budget, appoints the Secretary-General and elects members of other bodies.

B. The Security Council

6. The Security Council has as prime responsibility to maintain international peace and security. It holds itself in readiness to meet at any time, whenever peace is threatened. Member States are obliged to carry out its decisions.

7. The Council has 15 members, Five of those - China, France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom and the United States of America - are permanent members. The other 10 members are elected by the Assembly for two-year terms. Decisions require nine votes; except in votes on procedural questions, a decision cannot be taken if there is a "no" vote by a permanent member (known as the "veto"). The Council has the power to enforce its decisions by ordering collective military action or economic sanctions. It may send peace-keeping units (observers or military contingents) to troubled areas to reduce tensions and keep opposing forces apart. The duties of the Council also include recommendations to the Assembly on a candidate for Secretary-General and on the admission of new Members to the United Nations.

C. The Economic and Social Council

8. Working under the authority of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council co-ordinates the economic and social work of the United Nations and the related specialized agencies and institutions, known as the United Nations family of organizations. The Council has 54 members.

9. The Council's duties include making recommendations and guiding activities aimed at spurring world trade, encouraging economic growth of the developing countries, promoting the observance of human rights, improving the status of women, ending discrimination against minorities, securing the better use of natural resources and energy, spreading the benefits of science and technology, administering United Nations aid programmes, and fostering world co-operation in areas such as better housing, family planning or prevention of crime. Among the Council's subsidiary organs are five regional commissions, established to reflect the regional dimension of the United Nations activities. In a number of its fields activity,

the Council receives recommendations from its committees and commissions entrusted with the consideration of the problems. The Council also consults with non-governmental organizations concerned with economic and social problems.

D. The Trusteeship Council

10. This Council was established to ensure that Governments responsible for the administration of Trust Territories took adequate steps to prepare them for self-government or independence. The Council, which now has five members, is the only organ whose activities have diminished over the years. The aims of the trusteeship system have been fulfilled to such an extent that only one of the original 11 trusteeships now remains - the Pacific Islands (administered by the United States of America). All the other Trust Territories have attained the goals of self-government or independence, either as separate States or by joining neighbouring independent countries, following the period of Trusteeship Council supervision.

E. The International Court of Justice

11. The International Court of Justice is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It consists of 15 judges elected by the General Assembly and the Security Council. Only States may be parties in contentious cases brought before the Court. If a country does not wish to take part in a proceeding before the Court, it does not have to do so (unless required by special treaty provisions), but if it consents to become a party in a case, it is obligated to comply with the Court's decision.

12. In addition to deciding cases, the Court gives advisory opinions on legal questions at the request of United Nations bodies.

F. The Secretariat

13. The Secretariat works for the other organs of the United Nations and administers the programmes and policies laid down by them. At its head is the Secretary-General. As one of his many functions, he may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which, in his opinion, threatens international peace and security.

14. The Secretariat, an international staff of more than 16,000 men and women drawn from some 150 countries working at Headquarters and in the field all over the world, carries out the day-to-day work of the United Nations. As international civil servants, they work for the United Nations as a whole. Each takes an oath not to seek or receive instructions from any government or outside authority. The work of the Secretary-General and the staff is as varied as the problems dealt with by the United Nations. It includes: administering peace-keeping operations; organizing international conferences on problems of world-wide concern; surveying world economic and social trends and problems; preparing studies on such subjects as human rights, disarmament and development; and interpreting speeches, translating documents and servicing the world's communications media with information about the United Nations.

IV. OVERVIEW OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

A. Peace-making and peace-keeping

15. Since its establishment, the United Nations has often been called upon to prevent a dangerous situation from escalating into war, to persuade opposing parties to use the conference table rather than resort to arms, and to help restore peace or at least halt the fighting when conflicts occur. Despite frustrations and setbacks, the Organization has steadily developed its capacity as a peace-making and peace-keeping organization. Obviously, as observed by the Secretary-General of the Organization, Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar in the introduction to his annual report on the work of the Organization (September 1984) "a world of 159 sovereign States is one in which a diversity of perceptions and a clash of national policies is inevitable. However, to the degree in which these elements of difference or collision can lead to armed conflict, it is vital to make all governments realize that today, no State may expand at the expense of another and that war is now only a way to mutual destruction". Thanks to the existence and influence of the United Nations, the occasional hostile blasts have begun to blow more softly.

16. One may recall the important role played by the United Nations in the peace-making and peace-keeping processes in the former Congo (Leopoldville) now the Republic of Zaire), in Korea, in Cyprus, in the South-Asia subcontinent (India-Pakistan), in the Middle East (Palestine, Lebanon), in Kampuchea, in Afghanistan, etc.

B. Disarmament

17. The Organization has also been active and achieved some results in the field of disarmament which cannot be isolated from the objective of maintaining international peace and security. The very first resolution approved by the General Assembly, on 24 January 1946, sought the elimination of atomic weapons (the Hiroshima holocaust was still vivid in all minds) and other weapons of mass destruction. Since that time, the United Nations has made constant efforts to halt the arms race. It has been a permanent forum for disarmament discussions and negotiations, a source of recommendations of the international community to States, and an initiator of studies, such as those on the effects of nuclear weapons and fall-outs, on chemical and biological weapons, on reduction of military budgets, and on the economic and social consequences of the arms race. Over the years and under the auspices of the United Nations, many treaties and conventions aimed at protecting the human environment from nuclear weapons have been signed.

18. Despite these important agreements for limitation and control of armaments, global expenditures on arms and armies have continued to mount, consuming national and human resources that might otherwise be applied to development purposes.

C. Decolonization

19. Decolonization is a field in which the active involvement of the United Nations has helped to achieve a great deal of success. More than 70 nations whose peoples were formerly under colonial rule have joined the United Nations as sovereign independent States since the world Organization was founded in 1945. In that historic change, the United Nations has played a crucial role by encouraging the aspirations of dependent peoples and by setting goals and standards to accelerate their attainment of independence.

20. The decolonization efforts of the United Nations derive from the Charter principle of "equal rights and self-determination of peoples," as well as from three specific chapters in the Charter - XI, XII and XIII - devoted to the interests of dependent peoples. Since 1960, the United Nations has also been guided by the General Assembly's Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples [resolution 1514 (XV)],^{1/} in which Member States proclaimed the necessity of bringing colonialism to a speedy end. However, despite the great progress made against colonialism, over 3 million people still live under alien rule, and the United Nations continues its efforts to help achieve self-determination and independence in the remaining dependent territories.

D. Economic and social development and the regional dimension

21. The importance of international co-operation to spur economic and social development has been increasingly recognized over the years. The Organization is engaged in many fields of activity which did not even exist in 1945 - such as application of space technology, peaceful uses of atomic energy, potential resources of the sea-bed and protection of the human environment. With regard to human rights, a number of declarations and conventions or covenants have defined the rights of men, women and children in considerable detail, beginning with the historical Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the General Assembly in 1948.

22. Among the aims set forth in the United Nations Charter is the promotion of "Social Progress and Better Standards of Life in Large Freedom". This aim has received increasing attention during the last three decades, and reflects the emergence of developing countries which consider as one of their priorities the economic and social development of their people.

23. The Economic and Social Council was established as the principal organ to co-ordinate the global economic and social work of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and institutions. However, on the regional level, the need has been felt, as early as 1947, to establish regional economic commissions as subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council to be responsible for economic co-operation and development in the various regions. Thus the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) subsequently renamed the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) were established

^{1/} In 1985, the General Assembly will also observe the twenty-fifth anniversary of that Declaration.

in 1947 to serve the countries of Europe, Asia and Latin America respectively. The year 1958 was the turn of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) for the African region and the last of the five regional commissions, the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA), was established in 1973 to serve the countries of Western Asia. The basic functions of the regional commissions are to assist in raising the level of economic activity in the respective regions, to maintain and strengthen the economic relations of the countries in each region both among themselves and with other countries and to serve as a driving belt in the transmission of assistance from the United Nations and other organs to the countries in each region. In so doing, the commissions take into account the social aspects of economic development and the interrelation between economic and social factors. Within the framework of the policies of the United Nations, the commissions provide a means whereby regional groups of members may jointly develop their own policies and take practical action for economic development. By promoting concerted intergovernmental action and a continuous exchange of experience on common problems, the services rendered are increasingly appreciated by the participating States. The General Assembly, particularly by its resolutions 32/197 of 20 December 1977, 33/202 of 29 January 1979 and 34/206 of 19 December 1979, has endorsed the trend to decentralize the economic and social activities of the United Nations and to strengthen the role of the regional commissions which, since then, have been given the status of executing agencies in their own right. More specifically, the General Assembly, in resolution 34/206, emphasized the need for more vigorous action to enable the regional commissions to play their role fully as the main general economic and social development centres within the United Nations system for their respective regions, through full and effective implementation of the provisions in paragraphs 19, 26 and 28 of section IV of the annex to General Assembly resolution 32/197. Recently, the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1985/66 of 29 July 1983 on promotion of interregional economic and technical co-operation among developing countries, reaffirmed the important role of regional commissions in the promotion of economic and technical co-operation among developing countries at the subregional, regional and interregional levels. Indeed, for the past five years, the Economic Commission for Africa, like the other regional commissions, has devoted tremendous efforts to the co-operative activities likely to bring about accelerated economic integration of the region. To this end, ECA is helped by its operational arms in the field, the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs).

E. United Nations programmes

24. The United Nations "family" of organizations promotes global co-operation in many fields. The specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies work continuously towards the goals of expanding education; spreading scientific knowledge; increasing food and other agricultural production; safeguarding health and combating disease; improving the lot of working men and women and increasing employment opportunities; spreading economic development by spurring world trade and helping developing countries build industries and market their exports; improving international weather communications and postal services, as well as international co-operation in shipping and aviation; lending or investing billions of dollars for developing projects or factory expansions; balancing the world's

currencies; bringing health and other services to children and mothers; aiding refugees and meeting emergency disaster needs; working to stop illicit narcotics traffic; helping countries to carry out their population policies, etc. These multifarious tasks are carried out by the following operational units, among others; UNDP, UNESCO, UNCTAD, UNICEF, UNEP, UNIDO, FAO, ILO, UNHCR, WHO, World Bank, IMF, ITU, UPU, etc.

25. In looking back over the years since the Second World War, the Secretary-General pointed out in his 1984 annual report: "It would be a grave mistake to underestimate, or simply take for granted, what has been achieved and what is now being done by the United Nations system. During a period of revolutionary change it has accomplished a great deal for the betterment of the human condition." However, the noble vision of a world free from war, injustice and deprivation that was first conceived in San Francisco unfortunately remains an unattained objective for the international community. One subject of preoccupation is the reluctance being shown by the major supporters of the United Nations activities to inter-nationalism and multilateralism at a time when everything points to the strengthening of multilateralism in relation to world peace and to the world economy where there has been evidence that problems cannot be solved effectively by purely bilateral or unilateral efforts. This was one of the reasons why the General Assembly, at its thirty-eighth session, has decided to celebrate in 1985 the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations with a view to focusing attention, among other things, on the need to strengthen multilateralism.

V. PREPARATIONS FOR THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

26. At its thirty-eighth session, the General Assembly adopted decision 38/455 of 20 December 1983 on Commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations in 1985 and decided to establish a Preparatory Committee for the Fortieth Anniversary of the United Nations, consisting of the members of the General Committee of the thirty-eighth session and open to all Member States, whose task would be to consider and recommend to the Assembly at its thirty-ninth session proposals for suitable activities in connection with the observance in 1985 of the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations.

27. The Economic and Social Council, at its second regular session of 1984, adopted resolution 1984/82 on the Fortieth Anniversary of the United Nations. This resolution, after recalling General Assembly decision 38/455 and considering that the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system should contribute effectively to the observance of the anniversary, recommended in its operative paragraph 2 that the regional commissions and other subsidiary bodies of the Council and the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system should take full cognizance of the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations and participate actively in its observance.

28. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 39/161 by which it decided that the theme of the anniversary shall be "United Nations for a better world" and expressed the hope and desire that the year 1985 will mark the beginning of an era of durable and global peace and justice, social and economic development and progress and independence of all peoples.

29. Pursuant to these resolutions, the secretariat prepared the following draft programme of activities as a basic document for discussion during the twentieth session of the Commission and eleventh meeting of the Conference of Ministers:

Draft Programme of Activities for the Commemoration in Africa of
the Fortieth Anniversary of the United Nations

A. Secretariat level

(a) Lectures/Seminars

30. It is envisaged to organize throughout the second half of 1985 a series of lectures or seminars in Addis Ababa and at the headquarters of the AULPOCs on the role of the United Nations in promoting socio-economic progress in the world in general and in Africa in particular. Bearing in mind that the theme retained for the celebration of the anniversary is "United Nations for a better world", speakers may orient their lectures to this theme. Under the broad theme to be entitled "The role of the United Nations over the past four decades in promoting better living conditions for the African peoples", one may consider the addition of the following words to allow for as many sub-themes as possible: "in the field of" (for example):

- (a) Education and training;
- (b) Health;
- (c) Trade promotion;
- (d) Social development and humanitarian affairs;
- (e) Economic co-operation and integration;
- (f) Transport and communications.

(b) Essay writing competition

31. An essay writing competition will be organized at two levels for African school children and university students, the aim of which will be to test the extent to which African school children and university students are knowledgeable about the United Nations and its activities. There will be three winners in each category. The first prize in each category will be a round trip to United Nations Headquarters in New York, to give a chance to the winner to be more familiarized with the Organization.

32. Airline companies in Addis Ababa will be approached to donate tickets for the trip and the cost of subsistence and the other prizes will be met from funds to be raised from fund-raising activities.

(c) Film Shows

33. Films selected from the United Nations Department of Public Information Catalogue and showing the Organization's involvement in the socio-economic development of Africa will be shown throughout October 1985 at the rate of two to three films per week.

(d) Exhibitions

34. Special pictorial, United Nations publications and other exhibitions will be mounted.

(e) A United Nations Week

35. The climax of the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations will be the observance of the United Nations Week from 17 to 27 October 1985. In addition to the above-mentioned activities, the programme for the Week will include sporting events such as cycling, a marathon race, a tennis tournament, a table-tennis tournament, a volley-ball tournament, etc. Social functions will include an international fashion show, a beauty contest with the election of a Miss United Nations, an international picnic under the theme: "Food through five continents," and a Gala Buffet Dance.

36. These activities will be prepared by Ad Hoc Committees working in close co-operation with the Ethiopian Government, the United Nations agencies in Addis Ababa and the United Nations Women's Association.

B. Member States' level

37. During the forthcoming ECA Conference of Ministers in April 1985, member States will be informed of the activities envisaged by the secretariat and will be requested to use intensively their mass media to publicize the goals and objectives of the United Nations and to draw up similar or other programmes of activities, in close collaboration with the national United Nations Associations, the UNDP Offices, and the MULPOCs with a view to commemorating the anniversary in a solemn and suitable manner, at the national level.

38. The objective which this commemoration should try to attain is expressed by the Secretary-General of the Organization in his 1984 annual report when he "expressed the hope that this anniversary will provide a further occasion not only to review the performance of the Organization over the past four decades but above all, to encourage a rededication by Member States to the principles and purposes of the Charter, to promote interest in the work of the Organization and support for its efforts and to envisage international co-operation in all fields of human endeavour".

39. "The anniversary," he added, "will also provide a much needed opportunity to give the people of the world a true account of what the United Nations can and cannot do, of its successes and failures, of its means and limitations, of its dreams and realities."