



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 30th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda)

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AGENDA ITEM 63: COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE WHOLE QUESTION OF PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS IN ALL THEIR ASPECTS: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 63: COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE WHOLE QUESTION OF PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS IN ALL THEIR ASPECTS: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (continued) (A/36/469)

1. Mr. FATHALLA (Egypt) said that the importance attached by his country to the Special Committee on Peace-Keeping Operations stemmed from its firm belief in the vital role that United Nations peace-keeping forces had shown themselves capable of performing. It had always sought to enhance that role in its participation in the work of that Committee and of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization. The efforts of the two Committees were clearly interrelated and his delegation had joined with 17 others in presenting, in 1977, the proposal that the activities of the Committee on Peace-keeping Operations should be enhanced and expedited (A/AC.182/L.12/Rev.1), which was still under consideration in the Special Committee on the Charter.
2. His delegation had frequently appealed for a broader spirit of conciliation in order to bring about agreement on guidelines governing the conduct of peace-keeping operations and on specific questions related to their practical implementation, as called for in General Assembly resolution 35/121. Although the Special Committee had, regrettably, been unable to make any progress in its work, as was clear from its report (A/36/469), his delegation nevertheless agreed that its mandate should be renewed. He hoped that the Special Committee would take due account of previous experience in setting up peace-keeping operations and would bear in mind that peace-making had to go hand in hand with peace-keeping, that the prior consent of host countries was essential for the stationing and operation of peace-keeping forces and that Member States had a collective obligation to co-operate in existing operations and to refrain from frustrating their continuity, viability and solvency. With reference to the last point, his Government was concerned at continued non-compliance with United Nations resolutions on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). It was deeply grateful to all those soldiers who had participated in peace-keeping operations in Egypt.
3. Mrs. NOWOTNY (Austria) said that peace-keeping operations were among the most successful and important activities of the Organization in that military contingents stationed in sensitive areas under United Nations command had been able to reduce tension which might otherwise have led to new hostilities, to stabilize situations and to create a climate in which negotiated settlements could be sought. Such operations played an essential role in the primary task of the United Nations, that of the maintenance of international peace and security. Her country had taken part in various peace-keeping operations and was prepared to do so again in the future, wishing as it did to share in collective responsibility for such matters.
4. In recent years, peace-keeping operations had undergone a considerable change in scope and mandate from a situation in which they had been conceived of as being limited to disengagement and surveillance to one in which operations had been set up in a decidedly political context. Such developments had made the dichotomy

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(Mrs. Nowotny, Austria)

between operations in the field and the work of the Special Committee all the more disturbing. The Special Committee had been requested both to expedite its work for the completion of agreed guidelines governing the conduct of peace-keeping operations in accordance with the Charter and to devote attention to specific questions related to the practical implementation of such operations. Neither of those problems had been thoroughly discussed by the Special Committee during the year. There was a wide disparity of views on both issues and in such a sensitive area United Nations experience had proved that differences of that kind could ultimately be narrowed down only through a continuing review of positions and the maintenance of a constructive dialogue undertaken with patience and sensitivity. Her country therefore urged that the review of positions should be continued with renewed emphasis in 1982.

5. The Special Committee could address itself to several practical issues which had hitherto received only peripheral attention, such as the training of peace-keeping forces in order to enable them to cope adequately with changing roles and increasing expectations. Her delegation reiterated its suggestion that regional seminars under United Nations auspices should be organized for that purpose so that States with experience in the field could share their knowledge with others. Such seminars were held in Vienna on a regular basis by the International Peace Academy with the help of her Government. The possibility of organizing interregional seminars might be examined at a later stage.

6. Regional organizations, such as the Organization of African Unity, had recently given increased attention to the possibility of conducting peace-keeping operations at the regional level. The Special Committee could also play a role in that context by considering the various legal, political and practical aspects of such operations.

7. Her delegation also deemed it useful for the Special Committee to give due attention to questions relating to the safety and security of peace-keeping units. It might wish to elaborate standards which could eventually be incorporated into legal instruments defining legal responsibilities towards United Nations troops in the field, or to establish safety standards for the equipment they used.

8. It was of great concern to troop-contributing countries and essential for the successful execution of operations that the United Nations should meet the financial obligations involved. Delays in the payment of assessed contributions and insufficient voluntary contributions had led to extremely difficult situations. Her delegation therefore appealed to all States to contribute generously in accordance with their financial means.

9. She paid a tribute to the soldiers serving with the United Nations forces for the efficiency and devotion with which they carried out their task in dangerous and difficult circumstances and sincerely thanked them for their contribution to the maintenance of peace and security in the world.

10. Mr. NEIL (Jamaica) said that although peace-keeping operations were important and useful instruments in the maintenance of international peace and security, they

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(Mr. Neil, Jamaica)

could not in themselves resolve differences and their use was essentially a transitional arrangement. While experience had shown the value of such operations, their effectiveness had been hampered by the fact that many were conducted in an ad hoc manner and in difficult and dangerous circumstances and by the problems relating to their financing. The General Assembly had recognized the need for guidelines defining and regulating the nature of the operational framework for the conduct of peace-keeping operations. Such guidelines should not be too tightly drawn and should take account of the diverse circumstances in different areas, the different functions which had to be performed and the necessary degree of operational flexibility. Peace-keeping operations were a collective responsibility and all Member States, in particular the permanent members of the Security Council, which had been granted special powers under the Charter in that respect, should bear their assessed proportion of the cost.

11. The Special Committee on Peace-Keeping Operations had been entrusted with a very important mandate. In resolution 35/121 the General Assembly had requested the Special Committee to report to the Assembly at its thirty-sixth session on its work towards the completion of agreed guidelines and on questions related to the practical implementation of peace-keeping operations. That report, contained in document A/36/469, consisted of just over one page and showed that the efforts of the Special Committee had been very modest. The resolutions of the General Assembly expressed the will of the international community and should be regarded as carrying great weight and authority. His delegation did not, however, underestimate the difficulties faced by the Special Committee in carrying out its mandate. The long-standing and basic differences mentioned in the report were indeed formidable and the drafting of agreed guidelines would not be easy. The recognition of difficulties should not, however, be an excuse for inaction and a start could be made on those areas where there was consensus or on the elaboration of a text reflecting areas of agreement and disagreement in order to avoid a situation where failure could become institutionalized.

12. His delegation welcomed the fact that the Special Committee had recognized the importance of the issues involved, but that was precisely why it had doubts about renewing the Committee's mandate. The General Assembly should explore other ways of achieving the goals for which the Special Committee had been created. For instance, the Permanent Representative of Egypt had suggested in the plenary that a special session of the General Assembly should be held to appraise the role of the existing international machinery and its potential, and in particular, the role of the collective security system in the maintenance of international peace and security. That might help to give heightened political emphasis to United Nations peace-keeping operations and to provide the momentum for elaborating a collective security system with peace-keeping machinery as envisaged in the Charter.

13. Alternatively, a new subsidiary body of the General Assembly might be created to start afresh on the preparation of guidelines and other matters connected with peace-keeping operations. For instance, an expert group could work out draft guidelines for later consideration by an intergovernmental body. There might well be other possibilities but what was important was that the General Assembly should attempt to break the present deadlock.

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14. Mr. CRAIG (Ireland) observed that peace-keeping operations had rightly come to be seen as an indispensable instrument for promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes and averting hostilities. The concept of peace-keeping was far from being a static one, however, and the strength of past operations had laid in their flexibility. An invaluable body of experience had thus been accumulated in relation to the practical conduct of such operations.

15. His delegation supported the continuing efforts of the Special Committee to agree on guidelines for and consider practical aspects of peace-keeping operations, but it recognized that the Committee faced tremendous difficulties, not only because of the long-standing basic differences among delegations but also because of the inherent difficulty of framing guidelines that would preserve the necessary flexibility. It was particularly aware of the value of accumulated experience in peace-keeping operations because Ireland had participated in virtually every United Nations peace-keeping and observation mission since Irish military observers had joined the Observer Group in Lebanon in 1958. The bulk of its present participation was in UNIFIL, which, despite severe problems in the field, was playing a vital role of conflict-control in southern Lebanon.

16. In the light of Ireland's own experience, his delegation wished to stress four principles which it considered to be of particular importance: 1. a peace-keeping force should have no enemies but must enjoy the full co-operation of all the parties involved in a dispute. That distinguished peace-keeping operations from enforcement action. 2. Peace-keeping operations must at all times have the full backing of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council. 3. The dispatch of a peace-keeping force should not replace but back up attempts to arrive at a peaceful settlement, including negotiations between the parties concerned. 4. The Secretary-General should have adequate authority to ensure the effective conduct of peace-keeping operations.

17. All Member States bore collective responsibility for the maintenance of peace and should therefore share equitably the financial responsibility for peace-keeping operations. His delegation continued to be concerned at the serious financial situation faced by some peace-keeping operations, particularly UNIFIL, because some States had withheld assessed contributions. Such States were not only failing to fulfil their obligations under the Charter but were also placing a disproportionate financial burden on other Member States, particularly those which participated in peace-keeping operations. That situation could undermine efforts to ensure wide geographical representation in the composition of peace-keeping forces. His delegation had played an active part in seeking to improve the financial situation of peace-keeping operations, but believed that that problem could be resolved only if all States contributed equitably.

18. His delegation wished to express appreciation for the way in which the Secretary-General and his staff had performed their tasks in accordance with the mandates laid down by the Security Council and to pay a tribute to the members of the various United Nations peace-keeping and observation missions.

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19. Mr. SCHOENHERR (German Democratic Republic) deplored the fact that the Special Committee had still not made progress on the substantive issues entrusted to it, in particular, on agreed guidelines to govern peace-keeping operations, and that the over-emphasis on so-called practical aspects complicated the solution of the main issue and was thus, in the final analysis, contrary to the Committee's mandate.

20. There had been numerous examples of so-called peace-keeping operations in the history of the United Nations. However, he questioned whether such operations had always been proof of the Organization's effectiveness in maintaining international peace and security and whether they had always been consistent with the Charter. The Special Committee's main task was to complete agreed guidelines and practical aspects could be considered only on the basis of such guidelines. He wondered whether attempts to give priority to practical aspects were not in fact intended to circumvent basic provisions of the Charter.

21. The main objective which his country pursued in its foreign policy was the maintenance of peace and it considered United Nations peace-keeping operations to be one possible means of restoring peace on the basis of the Charter. In that connexion, Article 24 of the Charter provided that the Security Council bore primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace. Thus, only the Security Council was competent to take decisions on what measures the United Nations should take to maintain or restore peace, especially decisions on the creation of armed forces, the determination of their tasks, their composition, the duration of operations, etc. Again, only the Security Council could decide on the financing of such operations. His delegation believed that the aggressor should bear full responsibility for all the damage caused and that any other provisions on the financing of peace-keeping operations might encourage dangerous acts on the part of those interested in fomenting conflicts.

22. Peace-keeping operations were only one of the means available to the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. Under Article 41 of the Charter, the Security Council could decide on a number of important measures other than the deployment of armed forces. Such possibilities had yet to be used consistently and effectively. Moreover, United Nations efforts to strengthen international peace and security were not limited to peace-keeping. Various Member States had proposed other ways of normalizing the international situation. The Soviet Union, for instance, had proposed the conclusion of a world treaty on the non-use of force in international relations which would provide the basis for lasting peace in the world. That proposal should be borne in mind in the work on agreed guidelines.

23. Mr. OVINNIKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation attached great importance to the completion of agreed guidelines on the conduct of peace-keeping operations in accordance with the Charter, the Preamble to which stated that armed force should not be used, save in the common interest. Agreement on that issue was a major political and practical problem and all peace-loving States should be involved in its solution. Only strict respect for

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(Mr. Ovinnikov, USSR)

the Charter could really guarantee that armed forces would be used only in accordance with the Charter and in the interests of States, particularly small States, and the Security Council alone had the authority to take action to maintain or restore international peace.

24. His delegation was convinced that the only effective way to deal with the question of peace-keeping operations was to work out solutions by agreement. Any attempt to impose positions which ran counter to the Charter could create serious difficulties for the Special Committee's work.

25. Some time previously, the working group of the Special Committee had reached a definite understanding on the need to base its work on the principles of the Charter, and it had made some progress on that basis. His delegation was prepared to go back to the guidelines agreed on in the working group and to continue work on them. It had considerable doubts, however, as to the readiness of some other States to get back to constructive work. Those States were moving in quite the opposite direction - towards the creation of "rapid deployment forces" which were not in the common interest of Member States but rather in the narrow interests of certain Powers which would use them for direct intervention in the internal affairs of small countries.

26. His delegation could not agree with the proposal that the Special Committee and its working group should devote most of their attention to the so-called practical aspects of peace-keeping operations. Attempts to divert the Committee's attention from resolving the main issues could play into the hands of those who did not want the Committee to complete its main task. The so-called practical aspects could be worked out in special agreements concluded under Article 43 of the Charter between the Security Council and potential troop-contributing countries. The Special Committee's main task was to complete agreed guidelines for peace-keeping operations in the common interest of Member States.

27. His delegation was in favour of renewing the Special Committee's mandate.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.