

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

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

## I

The past year has brought new crises and few encouragements. The pattern of world affairs has shifted in unexpected and at times ominous ways, creating fresh strains in international relations and tending to aggravate many existing problems. It is right and appropriate to view this situation with concern. We would be well advised, however, to bear in mind that change and stress are inevitable in human affairs; indeed, one of the major functions of the United Nations is to provide the institutional framework through which the nature and implications of these stresses may be identified and considered in a civilized and peaceful way, so that timely concerted steps may be taken to deal with them effectively before they grow out of control.

The main features of the international landscape as it has evolved over the past year are all too well known. Relations between East and West have once again become severely strained. The arms race, especially the competition in nuclear weapons, continues unabated, representing not only a perennial risk to human survival but also an inordinate waste of human and other vital resources. A number of key disputes, dangerously interconnected with the fragile structure of world peace, remain unresolved and continue to give rise to violence and frustration. The effort to devise global economic solutions suitable to present realities remains deadlocked, while poverty and economic disaster threaten large segments of the world's population. Violence and various forms of terrorism have taken an increasing toll.

This is a dark picture and one of which Governments are very much aware. Indeed, there is no shortage of proposed solutions for one or another of the problems in question, and never before has humanity been in possession of such a variety of means to deal with its problems. It is evident, however, that we are still far from reconciling our differences as to the approaches to be used and the solutions to be chosen, especially since these problems are in many cases tied to severe conflicts of interest which require the most intensive efforts of creative statesmanship if they are to be overcome in a concerted and generally acceptable manner. For the United Nations, therefore, the basic question is whether we shall be able to take advantage of our awareness and knowledge to act together and in time before our problems overwhelm our capacity for dealing with them in an orderly and peaceful manner.

## II

Looking back over the nearly 10 years I have served as Secretary-General of the United Nations, there have unquestionably been advances in many fields, and some specific crises, including humanitarian emergencies, have in fact been resolved. The main problems, however, have persisted and even become

more acute, although there have been successes in preventing some of these problems from escalating out of control.

Ten years ago, the international situation was dominated by the destructive war in Indo-China, which seemed to defy efforts at a negotiated settlement and could not be dealt with in the framework of the United Nations. That war, moreover, poisoned relations between the great Powers and adversely affected many other aspects of international life. In the south Asian subcontinent, war was imminent, and a major humanitarian crisis had developed. The most populous country in the world was still not represented in the United Nations. On the problems of the Middle East, Cyprus, Southern Rhodesia and Namibia, efforts to find basic solutions were continuing with little apparent prospect of early success, while in two of these situations the actual area of conflict was being controlled by deploying United Nations peace-keeping operations. A wide variety of efforts were continuing on various aspects of disarmament. The world economic situation and the relationship of developed and developing countries—known as the North-South dialogue—were major fields of effort and anxiety.

Since that time there have been many fluctuations in the world situation and its component parts. The People's Republic of China at last assumed its rightful place in the Organization. Great hopes were pinned on the process of détente. The war in the south Asian subcontinent was followed by improved relations in the area and the growing effectiveness of the immense United Nations relief operation in Bangladesh.

In 1973, the Middle East war, apart from significantly changing the Middle East balance itself, put East-West relations to a severe test which they in the end survived, contributed to radical changes in the world economic situation and demonstrated beyond question the value of the United Nations as a mechanism for crisis management and conflict control. It also gave a new basis and momentum to United Nations peace-keeping operations. The Middle East has remained a central anxiety and preoccupation of the international community throughout the period.

In 1974, the coup in Cyprus and subsequent events radically changed the situation in the island without in any way solving the problem. The United Nations has remained at the centre of the peace-making and peace-keeping effort in Cyprus ever since.

In 1975, the war in Indo-China came at last to an end, leaving behind it a wasteland of political, humanitarian and economic problems, many of which are still with us.

Since the civil war in 1975, developments in Lebanon have been a major and tragic feature of the international scene. The United Nations became more closely involved with Lebanon in 1978, when the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was created in the aftermath of violence in the area,

culminating in the military intervention of Israel in southern Lebanon. The situation in Lebanon has remained a major preoccupation of the Organization up to the present time.

In 1979, events in Indo-China, and particularly in Kampuchea, created new tensions which, despite all efforts through the machinery of the United Nations, still remain to be resolved. A further problem, giving rise to the most serious repercussions on the broader international scene, developed in Afghanistan. The issue of the United States hostages in Iran presented the world community with a new and unprecedented crisis, which was finally resolved in January of this year.

The war between Iran and Iraq, which began in September 1980, has resisted to this day the efforts of the United Nations as well as other groupings of Governments to find a peaceful solution.

The accession to independence of the Portuguese colonies in 1974, and that of Zimbabwe in 1980, brought the process of decolonization near to a conclusion. The major outstanding problem remains the achievement of independence for Namibia, which has been and is the subject of intensive efforts to find an internationally acceptable settlement.

The effort to make progress on disarmament has continued during the period, reaching a peak at the tenth special session of the General Assembly in 1978. These efforts have been paralleled by bilateral and multilateral negotiations outside the United Nations, such as the strategic arms limitation talks (SALT). Nevertheless, this most difficult and vital of problems remains a central preoccupation of the international community and looms above all others as an obstacle to our transition to a new and less dangerous scheme of international relations. Indeed, there have been setbacks in the search for arms control agreements, although efforts seem at present to be under way to find a new basis for the resumption of the SALT process, and of negotiations on theatre weapons systems.

On the humanitarian side, the United Nations system has led the struggle to deal with a number of massive emergencies—Bangladesh, the Sahel, the refugees of Africa and Indo-China and the critical situation in Kampuchea, to name only some of the major challenges. Countless human lives have been saved by these endeavours, which for all the difficulties they faced have strikingly illustrated the capacity of the international community to bring relief and hope to the victims of war and disaster.

The effort to translate the human rights principles laid down in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into binding obligations has constituted a major innovation in defining the area of legitimate international concern. The international community has displayed a growing interest in the protection of human rights. Individuals and peoples all over the world have looked to the United Nations to act effectively in securing the realization of human rights and in taking measures against violations of these rights. The good offices of the Secretary-General have also become an essential and valuable complement to the organs and procedures for the promotion and protection of human rights.

The relatively new role of the United Nations in

concentrating information and expertise on new global problems resulting mainly from technological change has intensified since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972. Population, food, water and energy have been among the subjects of world conferences since that time, while intensive efforts have also been made on the rights and status of women and children.

The Declaration and the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, adopted in 1974, created a new and exceedingly complex target for the efforts of the international community to arrive at satisfactory economic arrangements for the new world that has come into being since the Second World War.

On the important complex of questions relating to the law of the sea, an immense effort has been deployed, with extraordinary though not yet conclusive success, to arrive at a comprehensive treaty. This is a subject of capital importance to the economic aspirations of mankind and, as we have recently been reminded, to future peace and order. I hope that the difficulties that have prevented the completion of this treaty will be speedily overcome.

I have given a cursory review of some of the main points of the preceding decade as a reminder of the complexity and variety of the issues we face and of the encouraging fact that, though many problems remain obdurate, we do advance and make innovations, in spite of all the frustrations and obstacles of which we constantly complain.

### III

Aside from the specific problems of our time to which I have referred, there are certain unique factors which confront humanity and which must be taken into account if we are to maintain direction and make progress in the immense task of building some reasonably acceptable degree of world order. These factors are to some extent the result of the scientific and technological revolution, which has altered the human condition in ways which we are still only beginning to comprehend. Over the past decade, the United Nations has played a crucial role in focusing attention on them.

The first of these factors is the existence of weapons of mass destruction capable, in far less than their present quantities, of destroying our society and civilization.

The second is the population explosion which, in putting immense strains on the environment and on the structures of society, could well in the next generation fatally damage both. Allied to this problem is the fact that in the industrial age we have become dependent on irreplaceable raw materials which are being consumed at a reckless speed before adequate substitutes have been devised.

A third factor is the effect of the revolution in communications which has thrown together, in an accelerated time-frame, nations and peoples living in an interdependent world with little compatibility or practice in existing together. One of my predecessors referred to this situation as the one world that has been imposed upon us before we were ready for it.

I shall revert later in more detail to some aspects of these phenomena. All of them point, and urgently so,

to the necessity of a vastly greater and more decisive effort to make international institutions work before we stumble into an irreversible trend to disaster.

How does the United Nations measure up to these great challenges of our time? I have to say that, for all our efforts and our undoubted sincerity, the Organization has not yet managed to cut through the political habits and attitudes of earlier and less hurried centuries and to come to grips decisively with these new factors of our existence. We talk about and express our anxieties and our good intentions, but we have yet to act upon the clear indications of what we are really up against.

All too often there is a tendency in some quarters to regard the United Nations as a side-show, while the real business of international relations and politics goes on elsewhere. This is, in my view, an extremely short-sighted attitude. The realists who set up the United Nations did so in the aftermath of a world disaster and in the knowledge that that disaster had come about from a failure to learn the lessons of the past. They knew, and we should remember, how quickly the fair weather of peace-time can be overtaken by unexpected and violent storms, particularly now when modern technology has speeded up the chain reaction of cause and effect. We need, now more than ever, the institutional shelters and defences that will protect our fragile society from such storms, and the restraint and accommodation that will be required to manage our planetary resources prudently and fairly. Until now the United Nations, with all its weaknesses, represents the best available structure for this purpose. We need to develop and strengthen the United Nations, not to undercut and deride it. It has already done an immense service in facilitating the process of geopolitical change, in absorbing much of the friction and heat of that process, in diagnosing global ailments and in devising remedies for them.

As it is, in matters of peace and security the Organization tends to come into its own mainly in times of acute international crisis. Then briefly, and simply because there is no other alternative, the determination to co-operate in averting disaster temporarily overcomes scepticism about international institutions. We urgently need, in this and other fields, to develop the Organization into a far more systematic, orderly, day-to-day means of improving and regulating the different aspects of international relations. Only then will interdependence and the new irreversible compression of human society into one world become a constructive rather than a negative force in human affairs.

#### IV

As I stated at the outset, the past year has been predominantly one of tension and severely strained relationships. The setbacks to East-West relations and a number of unresolved regional conflicts are a dangerous combination. The main thrust of the efforts of the United Nations has therefore been devoted to attempts to resolve or to contain such conflicts.

The situation in the Middle East with all its complexities and ramifications continues to be of central concern to the entire international community, containing as it does an explosive potential of conflict endangering world peace. Regrettably, the past year has seen few signs of progress towards the com-

prehensive settlement that ultimately can ensure a peaceful and just future for all the nations and peoples of the region. In fact, the already complex situation has been further complicated by a series of grave and often violent developments. The heightening of tension between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic, the Israeli attack on the nuclear facility in Iraq, the continuing cycle of violence in and around Lebanon, which recently escalated with tragic consequences, have all underlined the dangers inherent in the absence of progress towards a comprehensive settlement.

The ongoing tragedy of Lebanon is a telling reminder of the absolute necessity of embarking on the path of negotiation, however steep and difficult it may prove. The recently arranged cease-fire provides an opportunity that must not be missed, for it will not easily recur. No cease-fire, peace-keeping operation or other expedient for containing the conflict can, in the end, prevent new outbursts of violence as long as the basic elements of the problem are not tackled in negotiations involving all the parties concerned. I wish here to pay tribute to the officers and men of UNIFIL who have played, with great courage and devotion, a vital role of conflict control in southern Lebanon in exceptionally difficult circumstances.

With the acquisition of ever more sophisticated offensive weapons, each succeeding outburst of violence will inevitably become more destructive and at the same time more difficult to contain. It is only realistic to note that the spectre of nuclear weapons already looms over the area.

The United Nations has since 1948 been engaged in a practical way in operations designed to control conflict in the Middle East. Without these efforts, the situation would undoubtedly be infinitely more dangerous and destructive than it actually is. The Organization is also a universal forum in the framework of which efforts to evolve a peaceful settlement may in the end best be pursued. Such efforts will require not only the participation of all concerned, but their active determination to succeed. The issues are well known and include the right of all States in the area to live in peace, within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, and withdrawal from occupied territories. In this context, the question of Jerusalem remains of primary importance. We need urgently, in the interests of world peace as well as of the peoples of the Middle East, to take every possible step to encourage the will to negotiate and to settle on a solution to the central and obdurate problem of the Middle East.

A source of deep concern to the international community is the continuing conflict between Iran and Iraq. Besides causing great human suffering and material loss, the war carries the danger of far-reaching and unpredictable consequences in a very sensitive area of the world. It is imperative for the preservation of international peace and security that the fighting should come to an end and that an agreed settlement is reached, as soon as possible, in conformity with the principles of justice and international law and with due respect for the legitimate rights of both parties.

In an effort to resolve the dispute by peaceful means I offered my good offices to Iran and Iraq and appointed Mr. Olof Palme, former Prime Minister of

Sweden, as my Special Representative. The Islamic Conference and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries have shown similar concern and have also sent missions to the area. I have been kept informed of these efforts.

It has become clear that the issues underlying the conflict are complex and that a solution will not be reached easily. My Special Representative has discussed a comprehensive settlement involving a cease-fire and the withdrawal of forces as well as appropriate procedures for the peaceful resolution of the issues under dispute. In that context, he has also discussed possible measures which would enable the commercial ships of different nationalities, which became immobilized by the conflict, to leave the area. Although agreement on the over-all issues is yet to be reached, the continued support for the mission of my Special Representative, shown by both parties, has encouraged the continuation of our efforts.

Efforts to move forward to a just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus problem have continued throughout the year as part of the good offices mission entrusted to me by the Security Council. Meanwhile, the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus continues its essential function of preserving calm in the island. The difficulties in the way of a political solution of this problem are well known and need no further exposition here. I feel strongly, however, that a settlement is long overdue. The intercommunal talks still appear to be the best available means of negotiating a solution of this highly intractable problem which, during the past few weeks, has entered a new stage with the submission of comprehensive proposals encompassing both the territorial and constitutional aspects. This development has led to renewed hope that the negotiations may now enter a more constructive phase. To take advantage of this situation, I and my Special Representative may find it necessary to make special efforts and present some new ideas, as appropriate, to sustain the momentum of the negotiating process. I hope that any such moves on my part will be accepted in the spirit in which they are offered, as tools of the negotiating process for the purpose of facilitating progress towards an agreed solution. It bears repeating that continued delay in this effort only serves to consolidate the *status quo*, which both parties have found to be unsatisfactory.

The crisis over Afghanistan, which has caused great tension and anxiety throughout the world community in the past year, presents a somewhat different kind of challenge. The General Assembly has pronounced itself on the principles involved and the action required. Many efforts have been made to facilitate negotiations among the parties concerned with a view to achieving a fair political solution which will ensure that the Afghan people will be able to determine their own destiny, free from foreign intervention and interference. To this end I have designated a Personal Representative, Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, who has made two visits to the area and will continue to follow up all possibilities for a peaceful resolution of the problem.

The situation in South-East Asia remains a matter of grave concern. Peace and stability have not yet come to that tortured region and the situation remains precarious, especially with regard to the Kampuchean problem.

Following extensive consultations, the International Conference on Kampuchea, called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 35/6, was held in New York from 13 to 17 July 1981. I have also continued my efforts in the exercise of my good offices and I have been kept informed of consultations that have taken place among the countries of the region as well as other States. Regrettably, these efforts on many levels have not so far been able to bridge the gap which exists between the positions of the parties and States concerned, and real progress is yet to be made towards achieving a just and lasting settlement of this complex problem. Urgent efforts must be made by all concerned to achieve such a settlement with full regard for the principles of the Charter and the decisions of the General Assembly in order to resolve a serious situation which continues to deny peace and prosperity to the people of Kampuchea and indeed of the entire region. In this connexion, I note with satisfaction that the programme of assistance to the people of Kampuchea undertaken by the United Nations system has been successful in averting the worst of the famine and devastation that had been feared, although grave uncertainties and problems still lie ahead. Evidently, however, it is only with the achievement of a comprehensive solution of the underlying political and military issues that a fundamental solution to the humanitarian problem can be found.

The continuing stalemate over Namibia is extremely harmful to the interests of the people of Namibia as well as to the peace, security and development of southern Africa as a whole. It is indeed now affecting international relations on an even wider scale. The recent massive South African incursion into Angola, resulting in heavy casualties and destruction, tragically underscores the urgency of a solution to the problem of Namibia, for which territory the United Nations has a unique responsibility.

In my concern to break the impasse, which has regrettably lasted far too long, I took a series of initiatives culminating in the meeting at Geneva last January. When, at that meeting, South Africa stated that it was not yet prepared to sign a cease-fire agreement and proceed to the implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978), a great opportunity was missed. As a result, the bloodshed and violence continue, frustration and bitterness increase, and the future has to wait. In spite of various bilateral efforts since that time, no breakthrough has as yet been achieved. As I have said repeatedly, resolution 435 (1978) must remain the basis for the attainment of Namibia's independence. I cannot emphasize too strongly the necessity of moving forward and away from the present impasse. The recently concluded debate at the eighth emergency special session of the General Assembly reflects the deep and widespread concern felt by the international community on this matter. Renewed and concerted efforts are essential so that we can proceed without further delay to the solution envisaged in resolution 435 (1978), which has already been extensively discussed and agreed upon in principle.

Another, and major, concern in Africa is the persistence of the policy of *apartheid* in South Africa which has created so much bitterness and strife. Over the years we have seen its tragic consequences. The various races have been separated through a network of

legislation which has denied the vast majority their basic human rights. It has uprooted large numbers from their homes and has compelled many others to live in so-called homelands against their choice. All the people of South Africa must be enabled to participate on an equal footing in guiding the destiny of their country. Otherwise, violence will persist. Moreover, a continuation of the present racial policies of the Government of South Africa can only cause further strains on its relations with other members of the international community.

It is therefore understandable that, with growing impatience, there is increasing demand for additional steps to secure the elimination of *apartheid*. It was for this reason that the General Assembly recently convened in Paris the International Conference on Sanctions against South Africa.

Another urgent question for which an early solution must be found is that of Western Sahara. The situation remains tense, and every effort must be made to resolve it in keeping with the principles of the Charter. In this respect the General Assembly has made clear its position and has reaffirmed the right of the people of the Territory to self-determination.

This is a matter to which the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has given its utmost attention. In this connexion, I wish to pay tribute to the African leaders whose dedicated efforts have led to the recent agreement within OAU, under the chairmanship of President Moi of Kenya, on a peaceful solution of the problem. I had an opportunity of meeting recently with President Moi in Paris and discussing the role envisaged for the United Nations in the implementation of the OAU decision to organize and conduct a referendum in the territory and maintain a cease-fire. I expect further discussions to take place on this matter when the Chairman of OAU visits United Nations Headquarters towards the end of September.

As concerns the role of the United Nations in the practical arrangements for the solution of this problem, the appropriate organs of the United Nations will no doubt be requested to take the necessary decisions.

In Latin America, political and economic models are being adjusted to meet the expectations of societies in which traditional values are in a state of evolution and change. New circumstances and changed approaches have led to varying perceptions of each nation's political, economic and social requirements. In Central America, these changes have created a convulsive situation which has caused considerable concern and anxiety. The situation is further complicated by a self-perpetuating process of charges and counter-charges of foreign intervention.

I have consistently maintained that these problems require political solutions, arrived at with full regard for the individuality and sovereignty of each Latin American nation. It is also necessary to increase international co-operation to improve the social and economic conditions which prevail in the area, and which constitute, in the last analysis, the underlying reason for the current political turmoil. I welcome in this respect the joint efforts of Canada, Mexico, the United States and Venezuela, announced in the Bahamas, to help in the social and economic development of the Central American and Caribbean countries.

It is encouraging to note that the Latin American countries have continued to follow their tradition of settling their international disputes by peaceful means. On other occasions I have expressed my preoccupation about the dispute between Argentina and Chile over the Beagle Channel. These countries sought the mediation of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, whose continuing efforts have averted the danger of a military confrontation. In the same spirit of adherence to the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes, the Governments of Ecuador and Peru decided to engage in negotiations after a series of armed skirmishes early this year. By their positive attitude these Governments were able to arrest an escalation of hostilities. I hope that similar means will be used to settle other bilateral conflicts which have unfortunately arisen in the region.

## V

Events in the past year have combined to focus the attention of the world community once again on one of the central problems of our time—the arms race, which has continued practically unchecked almost since the end of the Second World War, and its infinitely ominous extension into the sphere of nuclear weapons.

What is called the problem of the arms race is in reality a complex of problems. The largest single factor fuelling the world-wide arms build-up has for a long time been the hostility between East and West. After a period of relative relaxation, the relations between the super-Powers are again going through a period of tension, and there are clear indications of a sharply intensified upward spiral in their arms build-up.

This development, with its evident risks for the future of all mankind, would be enough to justify the increased concern of the world community. But it is now becoming increasingly clear that the arms race, in all its fundamental irrationality and with all its attendant risks, shows signs of extending to the entire world. While the overwhelming bulk of military spending is still incurred by the two major blocs, defence expenditures in other countries in real terms have nearly doubled in the past decade, and the upward trend is continuing. All countries, large and small, cite legitimate security needs to justify their participation in the accelerating arms build-up. However, in addition to being inherently dangerous, the tensions generated in this manner may trigger destabilizing tendencies, with the risk of escalation in the event of competitive big-Power involvement. Furthermore, the arms race tends to drain away, more rapidly than ever, resources desperately needed for development.

From their first appearance in history, the existence of nuclear weapons added a new and frightening dimension to the potentialities for world catastrophe. While the Governments concerned have rightly expressed their extreme aversion to using such weapons, their very existence in the tense context of great-Power relationships constitutes an unprecedented threat to human society and civilization. In international affairs, confusion, confrontation and emotion cannot accurately be foreseen, forestalled or controlled, and a nuclear war would be both devastatingly

quick and conclusive. If the present nuclear-arms race among the most powerful States is the greatest potential danger threatening mankind, a similar race between additional nuclear States will add immeasurably to that danger and to the risk of the actual use of nuclear weapons.

For many years now, a major objective of the international community has been to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy while preventing or deterring its military applications. A most important measure in this context is the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to which 115 States are parties. Progress towards promoting the universality of that Treaty and the generalized acceptance of International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards would go far to allay anxieties that the spread of nuclear technology and material might open the door to potential military capabilities. It is also important to give urgent consideration to ways of ensuring that advanced technological means will not be used to circumvent the safeguards system.

Another highly significant development is the growing consideration being given to nuclear-weapon-free zones, of which the Treaty of Tlatelolco already provides a successful example. Besides being significant measures of non-proliferation, nuclear-weapon-free zones would also represent important steps towards regional nuclear disarmament.

International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards are an essential element in verifying the compliance with obligations undertaken with such agreements. These safeguards must provide the maximum possible confidence that the agreement is adequately implemented and are therefore basic to its effectiveness. Various international co-operative schemes, such as the joint storage of irradiated fuel or separated plutonium, are under consideration to strengthen the safeguards system and supplement it by institutional arrangements in order to enhance international confidence. It is also of great importance that agreements be reached between supplier countries and potential recipient States on conditions for supply of nuclear material, equipment and know-how, which not only promote non-proliferation but also help to establish a reliable supply market.

Recent events illustrate how important it is that all States should adhere to effective non-proliferation safeguards, be it through the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or through a nuclear-weapon-free zone, or bilaterally submit their entire nuclear effort to the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and that, if any State is concerned that the system may not give timely warning of a suspected event, it should make use of the international procedures inherent in the system to ascertain the factors in the case.

The recent debate on the raid on the Iraqi nuclear installations raised a number of questions which could not at the time be adequately answered. On such matters which directly affect not so much the future as the question of whether there is to be a future, I feel that the international community should have the best and most authoritative expert advice. I therefore think it might be wise to reactivate the Scientific Advisory Committee, which served the United Nations with distinction and effectiveness in the development of

activities and conferences on the peaceful uses of atomic energy. This Committee of most distinguished and respected scientists gave unique guidance and authority to those early efforts. If reconstituted at a similar level, following consultations with the International Atomic Energy Agency, it might, I believe, play a new and highly constructive role in problems such as the one I have just described.

I have drawn attention in the past to the close relationship between the arms race and the desire of States to ensure their security against what they perceive as concrete external dangers. Real progress towards a genuinely disarmed world must depend to a large extent on the development of confidence among nations and the removal of at least some of the sources of mistrust and hostility.

For this reason, I hope that the negotiations on strategic arms limitations will be resumed at the earliest possible date and carried forward to a successful conclusion. I also hope that the forthcoming meeting between the foreign ministers of the United States and the Soviet Union will constitute a new beginning in the efforts to restore dialogue and resume constructive negotiations. Recent proposals to convene summit meetings on both a bilateral and a multilateral basis in the Security Council are a natural extension of this renewed effort to maintain dialogue and communication, and deserve careful consideration.

The maintenance of dialogue is an essential part of the effort to remove the causes of suspicion and hostility between nations which fuel the current worldwide arms race. It must be recognized that the search for absolute security can, in fact, breed further insecurity. History demonstrates that there are times when an arms race can acquire a momentum of its own, quite independent of the political causes which initially provoked it, and lead inexorably to disaster.

It is the duty of the international community to attempt to break, at every possible point, the deadly cycle which leads from suspicion and hostility to increased armaments and from increased armaments to a further heightening of suspicion and hostility. At the same time, a renewed and concerted effort by the international community, conducted at every level, including the very highest, to deal directly with the threats posed by the arms race in all its forms seems to me in order.

In 1978 the General Assembly held a special session at which it laid the groundwork for sustained and meaningful progress towards disarmament. Unfortunately, the hopes embodied in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session have not yet been realized. Preparations are now in progress for a second special session of the Assembly devoted to disarmament, to be held in the spring of 1982. That session will provide an appropriate occasion for a renewed and concerted effort to deal directly with the awesome threats posed by the arms race.

## VI

Disarmament, in a nuclear age, is a matter of survival. Economic and social order in an age of interdependence and technological change is a matter of survival with decency and self-respect.

In spite of attempts to adjust national policies and strengthen international co-operation, the world econ-

omy is still encountering very serious difficulties, and a vastly greater effort is needed if lasting results are to be achieved. A generally low level of economic performance persists, affecting countries in all regions. Industrial output is practically stagnant and the expansion of world trade has slowed down. Payment imbalances have increased dramatically, unemployment and underemployment are worsening and, in spite of some recent progress, inflation is still at unacceptably high levels.

The international setting has had an adverse effect on the efforts of developing countries to accelerate their growth and restore their payments position. In 1980 there was an actual decline in the *per capita* incomes of a large majority of the developing countries, and a further year of decline in 1981 cannot yet be ruled out. It is ironical that, at a time when there is greater awareness than ever before of the need for development and for the ordering of the world's economy, there is, if present trends persist, a prospect that by 1990 the number of persons on the globe living in absolute poverty could exceed 800 million.

Such a situation of stagnation or increasing poverty is absolutely unacceptable. It contains the seeds of widespread tension and unrest which constitute, in the final analysis, a threat to world peace and stability.

In such a situation it is deeply disturbing to witness an actual weakening of international co-operative effort and an erosion of the system of multilateral co-operation. There has been an increasing trend towards unilateral measures which shift the burden of economic adjustment onto trading partners or onto the rest of the world. There is also a further danger of retaliatory measures, creating a vicious circle in which all countries will eventually find themselves worse off, as happened in the period between the two world wars.

The major industrial countries find it increasingly difficult to allocate resources to meet pressing economic and social needs at a time of slow growth, increasing inflation, changing monetary values and a general loss of economic dynamism. The competition for existing resources by a variety of interests has also made it difficult to take action to curb inflation. At the same time, military expenditure absorbs more and more resources without in the end enhancing international security. This year \$500 billion is being earmarked for armaments at a time when development assistance, which makes a very important and fundamental contribution to international stability, is marking time. Only 5 per cent of that sum would suffice to reach the target for official development assistance set in the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade.

At the international level, it has also proved difficult to take timely and necessary decisions. Progress is too small and too slow, as was evident, despite the constructive spirit in which it was undertaken, at the eleventh special session of the General Assembly. The international dialogue has not in recent months produced the impetus necessary for the implementation of the International Development Strategy adopted by the General Assembly, apart from notable progress in the official multilateral financing of balances of payments. On the contrary, unilateral measures have increased uncertainty and added to the factors militating against the success of the Strategy.

In particular, there are disturbing shortfalls in critically needed voluntary resource allocations to those international organizations which have a vital role to play in achieving the objectives of the International Development Strategy. Recently, for example, the suspension of some operations of the International Development Association deprived low-income developing countries of irreplaceable investment resources. At the same time, severe resource constraints are threatening the support which the United Nations Development Programme envisages rendering to the developing countries. This unfortunately also comes at a time when organizations of the United Nations system, most with years of experience, have a highly refined but underutilized capacity to provide development assistance.

The international community has a common and urgent interest in reversing the present adverse trends. A strengthening of international support in the key areas of food, energy, raw materials, finance and trade would do much to change the present economic situation in the interests of all countries. There is a compelling need to treat these problems in an integrated and coherent manner with the participation of all groups of countries.

I regret that to this day Member States have been unable to reach an agreement which would enable them to begin the process of global negotiations, the principle of which was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979. I sincerely hope that the misgivings or mistrust which persist in various quarters, as well as the substantive differences, can soon be overcome by the necessary political decisions.

Meanwhile, the forthcoming meeting of some heads of State or Government from the North and the South in Cancún may provide a renewed political impetus for achieving a meeting of minds conducive to the subsequent initiation of concerted actions affecting all Member States.

Within the United Nations, the Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy agreed last month on the Nairobi Programme of Action to promote the development and utilization of selected alternative energy sources. While the problems encountered by the Conference serve to measure the complexity of the energy situation confronting nations, the Programme of Action is a tangible achievement representing a basis for constructive and co-operative effort in a significant area that includes certain energy sources of critical importance, in particular to developing countries. The Programme of Action by itself is not a panacea but a beginning. Its effective implementation will depend on the continuing commitment of Governments and the supporting efforts of the United Nations system. A broader focus will eventually be needed, including, in due course, a realistic look at areas and types of energy sources not so far covered.

The United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Paris early this month, drew attention to the plight of countries whose standard of living was already at unacceptable levels and which faced further deterioration if international action was not forthcoming. The Conference emphasized the need for special measures, including concessional assistance, for such countries, in the context of the over-all effort for development.



These meetings provide opportunities for tackling, at the highest level and from different angles, the most pressing economic and social problems of the world and the obstacles which until now have inhibited our progress. In our time, international economic problems are inextricably linked with the maintenance of peace and stability and affect both the domestic and the external policies of countries. The complexity and scope of these problems demand statesmanship and political leadership of the highest order, for in the settlement of these problems lies the essential key to a stable and prosperous future, as well as to a satisfactory life for all the people of this earth. Only a new and bold approach, and vitally required resources, can remedy the present tendencies towards fragmentation, dispersal of effort and unilateralism, which are in the end policies of weakness, lack of confidence and despair.

## VII

The Charter speaks, in Article 55, of "the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations . . .". In fact, the United Nations has tried to go a good deal further along this road than its founders had foreseen. The effort to come to grips with problems affecting hundreds of millions of people across the whole spectrum of the human race is a testimony to a growing sense of humanity and responsibility.

The General Assembly proclaimed 1981 International Year of Disabled Persons, with the theme "Full participation and equality". The call of the Assembly has evoked a response on a much larger scale than had been anticipated. Over 100 Governments have established national committees to co-ordinate activities in support of the disabled; and the general public has reacted enthusiastically and, above all, so have the disabled themselves. At the international level, the secretariat of the International Year of Disabled Persons has arranged a series of seminars and symposia and has formulated a long-term plan of action to deal with this world-wide problem. I hope that the momentum generated by the Year will be sustained through practical measures equal to the needs of the situation.

In 1982 the problems of the elderly and the aged will be considered by a world assembly.

Sometimes the focus of international compassion is compelled to centre on a particular humanitarian tragedy of our time. In April of this year, the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, sponsored by the United Nations in close co-operation with OAU and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, recognized in a dramatic fashion the fact that Africa, with 5 million refugees, now accounts for more than half of the total world refugee population. This immense burden, falling upon some of the least developed countries of the world, is far beyond the resources of the countries of asylum which none the less, with their traditional hospitality, have done their best to care for their hapless guests. Ninety-nine Governments took part in this Conference, at which a large number of non-governmental organizations were also represented. The Conference achieved considerable

success in focusing attention on the plight of African refugees, in mobilizing practical support for their help and in assisting the countries of asylum to bear the burden. A total of \$560 million was pledged. This was a remarkable and timely international response and a convincing message of hope in answer to a desperate cry for help.

In Kampuchea and Thailand, as a result of developments in the former country, the international organizations concerned—the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Committee of the Red Cross—under the co-ordination of the United Nations, continued to provide humanitarian assistance. The basic objective of preserving life in Kampuchea has been secured up to the present time, but prospects for the rest of 1981 are dependent on the outcome of the current monsoon and are, at best, very uncertain. On the border between Kampuchea and Thailand, UNICEF, WFP and the International Committee of the Red Cross, with the assistance of several voluntary agencies, are providing basic rations for some 200,000 Kampucheans who are assembled in camps at the present time. Security, in the usually accepted sense of that word, is non-existent in the area; several political groups are strongly opposed to each other and there is a continuous toll of dead and wounded. This unfortunate situation is unlikely to be satisfactorily resolved unless a political solution to what has become an international problem can be found. Progress has been made by UNHCR in dealing with refugees in holding centres; the programme of resettlement is proceeding steadily and action has been initiated which could lead to the voluntary repatriation of a significant number of other Kampucheans now in these centres. Just under 100,000 Thai villagers affected by the influx of refugees from Kampuchea are receiving assistance from WFP, UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Another extremely serious refugee situation is the influx into Pakistan and Iran of more than 2 million refugees from Afghanistan. The High Commissioner is making all possible efforts to assist in alleviating the plight of these refugees.

In my last annual report I mentioned the problem of security, which sometimes arises in humanitarian emergencies. Unfortunately, we have not as yet found any satisfactory solution to this problem, which not only affects on occasion the effectiveness of relief and humanitarian operations, but also endangers the safety and the lives of the international and local personnel taking part in these operations.

## VIII

In the contemporary world, the interrelationship between human rights and questions of peace and security is emerging into sharper focus. The purposes and principles of the Charter are mutually supporting and interdependent. Thus, it is increasingly clear that peace and development are necessary for the full realization of human rights. At the same time, in the absence of respect for human rights, peace and devel-

opment lose much of their meaning. It is essential, therefore, that the efforts of the United Nations and its Member States to promote and protect civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights should be accorded the highest importance. The wide-ranging activities of the United Nations may be considered as integral parts of the efforts to promote and protect human rights. After all, the fact that millions of human beings are plagued by poverty, disease and lack of fulfilment of basic human needs constitutes one of the most extensive violations of human rights in the world today.

It is incumbent upon the United Nations to tackle all forms of violations of human rights which are deliberately inflicted upon human beings, such as *apartheid* and racial discrimination, political assassinations, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, enforced or involuntary disappearances, slavery and slavery-like practices. These and other serious violations of human rights which affect large numbers of people cannot be tolerated or excused, whatever the circumstances and wherever they occur, and the United Nations would be failing in its essential mission if it proved unable to deal with such violations in an effective manner.

I therefore welcome the consideration now being given by the Commission on Human Rights, as well as by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, to ways and means of responding urgently to situations of gross violations of human rights. Various forms of action have been taken to deal with certain situations of this kind, including public debate, contacts with Governments concerned, the appointment of special rapporteurs, envoys or representatives, the designation of working groups of experts and the dispatch of appeals. Consideration has also been given to confidential procedures to deal with some situations. It is my hope that these efforts will be continued and strengthened.

For my own part, I have continued to work with the Commission on Human Rights in its efforts to deal with situations of gross violations of human rights and, at the Commission's request, I have on numerous occasions initiated contacts with Governments. I have also continued to exercise my good offices on humanitarian grounds whenever I consider that my efforts may be of help to the victims concerned.

As regards the setting of standards, work is currently under way in various areas such as the prohibition of torture, the rights of the child, of minorities, of migrant workers and of non-citizens as well as the protection of prisoners and detainees and religious freedoms. I welcome the advances which have been made towards the adoption of a declaration on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief.

## IX

The Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea opened its tenth session last March under the shadow of the untimely passing of its President, Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe, an architect of the vast negotiating process that had led to the present draft Convention.

Despite the significant advance achieved over the last seven years, the hope that the work of the Confer-

ence would be concluded during 1981 did not materialize. It was with deep regret that I had to acknowledge that reality on the occasion of the opening of the tenth session.

At its resumed tenth session, the Conference was able, however, to find more generally acceptable solutions to some of the problems that had heretofore presented great difficulties. These include a new formulation on the delimitation of maritime boundaries between States with opposite or adjacent coastlines, as well as decisions on the sites of the future International Sea-Bed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Moreover, the Conference decided to formalize the text of the draft Convention and agreed to a time-table for its adoption.

I hardly need to emphasize once more the effect that the outcome of this Conference will have on the perceptions of Governments regarding the capacity of the United Nations to serve as an instrument for finding multilaterally negotiated solutions for global problems. Nor do I find it necessary to restate that there is no better alternative to a generally acceptable convention in which all matters pertaining to ocean space will be treated as a whole. The Conference agreed to hold its decision-making session during the spring of 1982 and to schedule the signing of the Final Act at Caracas early next autumn. In this connexion, I appeal to the Governments concerned to make a final concentrated effort to compose the remaining differences, including those that have emerged recently.

## X

In preparing my programme budget proposals for the biennium 1982-1983, my overriding concern was to preserve as effectively as possible the level of programmes approved by the Member States while recognizing the world-wide climate of economic and financial constraints. As long ago as the thirty-third session of the General Assembly, I reaffirmed my long-standing commitment to a policy of strict budgetary restraint. Continuing efforts to reduce budget growth in line with that policy have made it possible to present a zero real growth budget. I wish to emphasize here that this policy, which is basically effected through redeployment of staff resources, will in no way weaken, curtail or pre-empt programmes for support of economic and social development in developing countries.

In my report to the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session, I referred to the importance of rationalizing the substantive activities of the Organization to ensure that their orientation, content and delivery are timely and relevant to the priority needs of Member States. I can report that some progress has now been achieved in such a rationalization, aiming at the identification of activities which have little chance of making an effective contribution to the international community collectively and to Member States individually, and concentrating on activities which can make such a contribution. This search for greater relevance and effectiveness should be pursued through the setting of explicit priorities among United Nations programmes, new approaches to the formulation of the medium-term plan for the period 1984-1989, and the

further development of procedures for programme evaluation.

The Organization has had for several years a system for setting priorities among its programmes, but this system was hampered by a number of technical difficulties. A reformulation of these procedures has been proposed which would result in the phased introduction of a new system of priority-setting over the next few years. The purpose is to ensure that high-priority programmes receive appropriate resources either through fresh allocations by the General Assembly or through redeployment of resources from lower priority activities. This system of priority-setting would apply to all activities covered by the regular budget, except for activities undertaken pursuant to decisions of the Security Council relating to the maintenance of international peace and security.

The size and relative complexity of our Organization have to be reckoned with, and it has become necessary to decentralize many financial activities. In recent years, Member States have expressed concern that such decentralization should not in any way diminish the role of the central financial and programming services. To meet this concern, the Organization's programme planning and financial policies are being further reviewed. Particular attention is being given to the administration and control of the regular budget, the management of the cash resources of the Organization, and the acceptance and management of extra-budgetary resources.

## XI

Ensuring the vitality and viability of the international civil service is a continuing and complex task. The difficulties in maintaining the principles and objectives of the Charter with respect to the concept of an independent international civil service are a matter of legitimate concern, from their different viewpoints, to Member States, the administration and the staff. There is now, I believe, a greater awareness on all sides of the complexity of the day-to-day functioning of an international secretariat that must operate under conditions dissimilar to those obtaining in any national civil service, and even different from those prevailing in the early years of the Organization.

The very diversity of the international Secretariat inevitably creates stresses and strains which have to be accommodated if the system is to work. This is a challenge for all concerned, whatever their particular interests may be. We cannot ignore these obvious realities, but we must try unceasingly, as the Charter requires, to concentrate on enhancing the efficiency, competence and integrity of the international civil service and to ensure respect for the exclusively international character of its responsibilities.

As we experience and try to cope with the dilemmas of the international Secretariat, we are constantly challenged from a number of directions. There are those who rightly insist that the letter and spirit of the Charter relating to the international civil service must be scrupulously observed. There are the legislative intergovernmental bodies of the Organization which from time to time initiate various proposals for the reform or improvement of the service. These proposals include specific directives concerning such matters

as equitable geographical distribution, a more balanced distribution of nationalities in the units of the Secretariat, equal opportunities between the sexes, and reform of various aspects of our personnel policies. There is also constantly expressed the vitally essential viewpoint of the dedicated international civil servants who carry out the day-to-day tasks of the Organization.

As regards directives from intergovernmental bodies, efforts are under way to bring about as effectively and practically as possible the reforms and changes required. Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that the pace of reform and change is unlikely, in the present circumstances, to be as rapid or as comprehensive as would ideally be desired. In this regard, I feel that it would be prudent to bear in mind that there are certain areas of administration where, of necessity, the Secretary-General must continue to have proper discretion and responsibility in order to fulfil his tasks in accordance with the Charter.

As far as the members of the Secretariat are concerned, there is no doubt that, as a result of the strains and stresses mentioned above, the rank and file of the staff is sometimes disillusioned. As we go through the inescapable process of adjusting to the new international environment and circumstances, many staff members may wonder whether circumstances at time compel a departure from the principles set out in the Charter. I fully understand such anxieties and, for my part, I am determined that the principles of the Charter will at all times be upheld. However, we must also take account of realities. Member States are increasingly concerned about the high cost of international organizations, of which the largest part is for staff costs. In addition, those who bear the bulk of these costs expect their share of the financial burden to be adequately reflected in the composition of the Secretariat. Obviously, such approaches sometimes have an impact on career development prospects as well as recruitment policies and are therefore of concern to the international staff. On the other hand, due regard must be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible. In these circumstances, it is important to ensure that the interests of the international civil servants be preserved while recognizing the concerns of Member States.

The security of international civil servants is of increasing concern to staff members and should also be of major concern to all Member States. The Secretariat has reason to be concerned that the commitments made under the Charter and the relevant conventions regarding the inviolability of the international civil service are not being fully complied with. I strongly urge all Governments to maintain these commitments in regard to the international civil service and, if problems arise, to discuss them in full frankness with the Secretary-General and the administration.

The health and viability of the international civil service depend primarily on the quality of its staff. This is why I and the executive heads of the various United Nations agencies and programmes continue to make all possible efforts to ensure the recruitment into the service of men and women who meet the standards set out in the Charter. At the present time, we are, to some extent, going through what might be called a generation crisis. After more than three decades, those

who joined the United Nations Secretariat at the outset have left or are leaving the service. These dedicated men and women have made an outstanding contribution and have been the very foundation of the international civil service as we know it today. Their spirit of devotion and service is being passed on to the new generation of staff members, who will certainly bring their own contributions to the development of an international institution on which so much will depend in the future.

## XII

Since public support and understanding are indispensable to the effectiveness and development of our Organization, the problems of public information are of perennial—and often daily—concern to the Secretary-General. It is natural and desirable that a growing, and to some extent experimental, political system such as the United Nations should be subjected to continuous comment and criticism. And, since the Organization belongs to all the peoples of the world, that comment and criticism should come from as wide and varied a constituency as possible.

What concerns me far more is the starting-point and context of much of the criticism of the activities of the United Nations. Our experience in this century has shown beyond the shadow of a doubt that a world organization must be developed without delay and with the widest possible participation to enable us not only to deal with the effective maintenance of international peace and security, but to bring order into many other aspects of human activity, which, owing to the technological revolution, are now closely and vitally intertwined. In other words, we are living in one world whether we like it or not, and we have to develop institutions capable of regulating and guiding that world. Criticism which starts from this premise is welcome and constructive, however harsh it may sometimes be, though I think it is important to recognize that the United Nations is not a supranational government, but an organization of sovereign States. The other kind of criticism, which starts from the assumption that international organizations and co-operation are unnecessary, undesirable and unrealistic, strikes me as, at best, short-sighted and, at worst, dangerous for the future.

I cannot claim that we have been very successful so far in explaining to a world-wide public the nature, the problems and the basic necessity of the United Nations. All too often people seem to think that the Organization is no real concern of theirs or is even a threat to their own interests. As we get further away from the Second World War, more and more people seem unaware that devastating storms can suddenly darken the more or less tranquil skies of peace-time. I never cease to wonder at the equanimity with which many people appear to accept the implications of nuclear weapons and their steady and fantastic development. One witnesses with amazement the calm and almost academic public discussions of the growth and possible use of the vast new arsenal of sophisticated weapons, as if the whole system of destruction were perfectly safe because it was meant for deterrence and would therefore, in reality, never be used. In history there are very few instances of weapons which, once invented, remain permanently in the store-room.

People need to be constantly reminded that, if the instruments of peace set up to universal acclaim after the Second World War are properly used and developed, there is an alternative to this nightmare. It is, admittedly, an alternative which will, especially in the early stages, require great courage, vision and self-confidence, but the blueprint is there in the Charter.

The economic and social challenges of our time are, in their different ways, almost equally compelling. Again, we have a choice—to accept the present uncertainties and inequities and the privations and misery of a large segment of humanity, with all of the threat to world stability which they constitute, or to persevere in devising the better system which we know can be devised. Again, the second alternative will require courage, vision and an immense amount of hard work, not to mention public support at every stage. But can any reasonable person be in serious doubt as to the choice?

These basic choices are the context in which we must endeavour to gain public support and understanding for this very complex Organization. The daily activities of the United Nations, its difficulties and shortcomings as well as its achievements, will then be seen in a more realistic perspective. It is unrealistic to expect universal approval and enthusiasm for all of the works of an Organization as diverse and as complicated as the United Nations. But it should be possible to gain increasing understanding of its place in the world and of its vital purposes.

In these days when communications and the media, as never before, are so much an integral part of political life and power, we have to learn to use new methods, not to proselytize a reluctant public but to give that public a serious and informed basis on which to judge and to act in its own real interests. Those interests, for better or for worse, are now intimately bound up with the interests of all the other peoples of the world.

I hope very much that Member States will make every effort to assist us in the Secretariat in making our Organization better understood, not only through their participation in the General Assembly or in the Committee on Information, but also in the day-to-day political life of their countries.

## XIII

At the outset of this report, I gave a somewhat bleak assessment of the past year. I do not believe, however, that we have any basic reason for despair. We have tremendous problems, some of them the product of our own ingenuity. But we also have great assets and great possibilities if we are prepared to work together in taking advantage of them.

I feel strongly that a more positive approach to many of our problems would do much to overcome what now appear to be stalemates or insuperable obstacles. Such a positive approach must be related primarily to hopes for the future rather than to the grievances of the past.

It is only natural that the great historic changes of recent decades have generated serious conflicts of interest among nations, compounded at times by clashing conceptions of the past and incompatible visions of the future. These conflicts are genuine and

often spring from the operation of factors inherent in the political, economic and social dynamics of the contemporary world. In earlier periods, tensions resulting from such situations would almost inevitably have led to hostility and possibly war. The danger of this happening again is still very much with us, and indeed the risks of confrontation have become immeasurably greater because of the development of ever more sophisticated means of destruction. What is different about the present is precisely that in the United Nations we now have an instrument to deal with these stresses in a rational manner. This instrument, however, is only as good as we make it. If properly used, it should enable us to substitute civilized and peaceful consideration of serious problems for hostile confrontation and the resort to violence with all their appalling dangers.

It would be idle to claim that Governments have in all cases learned to take full advantage of the United Nations as an instrument placed at the disposal of the international community to help solve, or at least to control, some of its intractable problems. To do so requires the steadfast application of political will, as well as a positive approach to the problems involved. This is particularly true of the great economic and social challenges of our time and especially of what is now referred to as the North-South range of problems.

For the great political issues which we face, a new attitude and a more positive approach might also pay unexpected dividends. While the problems are difficult, there can be movement towards solutions that would take due account of the interests and aspirations of all concerned. We know, for example, that the problems of the Middle East are made deeper and more complex on all sides by past events and the memory of those events. Seen in the context of the future, however, that region with its abundance of human and other resources should be a particularly promising and favoured part of the world. Similarly, if the present stalemate could be overcome and bitterness and violence be allowed to abate, an independent Namibia could become the catalyst of a radical improvement of relationships in the whole region of southern Africa, another area of great promise and potential. The same considerations apply to other problem areas mentioned in this report.

I need hardly add that a positive approach to the relationships of the greatest Powers would perhaps be the greatest boon of all.

I know that it is easier to counsel such an attitude than to adopt it, and that virtually all Governments have difficulties, often of the most serious kind, in choosing the shortest and most rational route to solutions. But I am increasingly impressed by how little advantage any party derives in the long run from, and how great is the loss engendered by, the perpetuation of a problem, not only for those directly concerned but also often for the international community as a whole.

One of the great advantages of the United Nations is that its help and its services as an intermediary can be accepted without loss of face by all concerned since it is an Organization that belongs to all its Members. I urge that its facilities be used more intensively and more along the lines laid down in the Charter to solve the great perennial problems of our time.

As anyone who works in the United Nations knows, there are few, if any, short cuts to a more just, better organized and more peaceful world. I believe, however, that the path mapped out in the Charter 36 years ago is still the best route for a world of sovereign nations, which is the reality of our time. Indeed, the possible alternatives do not bear serious consideration. In many respects we have gone further along the way than—especially in moments of anxiety or frustration—we tend to believe.

I hope that in the coming year we may see, and take part in, further steps forward both on particular issues and towards the general goal of a more peaceful and more equitable world community. I also hope that it will be a year both of efforts and of results on the international scene and that, in the months before us, the United Nations will be used in constructive ways to promote peace and to solve problems.

To bring this about will require understanding and statesmanship of the highest order. It will also require a realization that, while humanity must find the capacity and the will to tackle its difficulties, it has no real alternative for survival.



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