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TEXT OF ADDRESS BY SECRETARY-GENERAL DAG HAMMARSKJOLD AT A PUBLIC
MEETING ORGANIZED BY THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION, AT THE ROYAL
ALBERT HALL, LONDON, 17 DECEMBER 1953

Mr. Chairman, Members and friends of the United Nations Association:

I am glad that the course of events at United Nations Headquarters has been such as to make it possible for me to fly over from New York to be with you tonight. The distance which separates us is considerable. The travel time, however, is less impressive. And we are united in our effort, our hope and our faith when facing the problems and difficulties which it is the purpose of the United Nations to help us solve.

It may seem a long way to come here from New York, even to address so distinguished a gathering. But this unity of purpose and interests made me anxious to avail myself of the opportunity to speak to you about our work. The distance that separates the Headquarters of the United Nations from England and from Europe could no longer be permitted to postpone a contact for which I have been longing ever since I took office.

It is, in my view, an advantage to the United Nations that its Assembly meets and its Secretariat works in a country which represents such a dynamic force in our world today. This keeps us constantly and acutely aware of the realities of international politics. But the intense attention to current American developments which is unavoidable for everyone who works at the Headquarters must never lead us to act as if we were primarily speaking to America or -- in any way -- for America.

Our roots are in all peoples and the fact that the United Nations is the servant of all peoples should be reflected in an unrelenting effort to maintain an intimate and personal contact with all peoples. Such a living contact cannot be maintained by our efforts alone. Those efforts must meet a response in the peoples

themselves. Therefore, the work of an association like yours is essential. We are grateful to the British people, and particularly to the leaders and members of the United Nations Association, for the strength of their support of the United Nations and the depth of their understanding of its essential meaning for the future. I am happy to pay honour in person for that support and for that understanding and to establish a direct contact with you all. In the times to come, when we try to map out the way ahead, you will help us by your advice as well as by your constructive criticism, based on a long experience and inspired by aspirations which you share with us.

The British tradition of creative action in the international field is a source from which your support and your understanding flow. I am thinking of the British Commonwealth as it has evolved. I have in mind the British support for the League of Nations in its best years. I have special reasons to remember the British contributions to the writing of the Charter and to these first years in the life of the United Nations. The British contributions in the hard struggle now under way to develop effective institutions for European political and economic unity are also present in my mind. Finally, may I, as Secretary-General of the United Nations, pay a personal tribute to the memory of that great international official, the first Secretary-General of the League of Nations, Sir Eric Drummond, whose pioneer work is both an example and a challenge to the latest of his successors.

I spoke about the work of the United Nations in the Assembly and in the Secretariat at the Headquarters. Let me try to explain to you what place that work, in my view, holds in the general United Nations venture.

The United Nations is faith and works -- faith in the possibility of a world without fear and works to bring that faith closer to realization in the life of men. What the United Nations does, or does not do, is rather reflected in, than determined by, what happens in New York. It is determined by the governments in 60 capitals and by all those who have a voice in influencing the policies of these governments. The United Nations in that sense has its center as much in London and New Delhi as it has in New York or Geneva. Its successes and its failures are the end result and the measure of the faith and works of all the peoples of its Member nations.

Thus, we must not think of the work of the United Nations merely in terms of its principal and subsidiary organs. Wherever governments seek to carry out the principles of the Charter, and whatever diplomatic instruments they are using for these ends, the aims of the United Nations are being served.

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Besides the machinery of the United Nations itself, there are, as you know, many tools already utilized or in process of creation, which serve the central purpose. Programs for closer political and economic co-operation to meet special regional needs can strengthen the United Nations cause, provided they are developed with full recognition of the essentially universal interdependence of our world and do not attempt to make of regional groupings an extension of exclusive nationalism. If they are adjusted to that inter-dependence I am confident that ways will be found for a co-operation between the United Nations Organization and the regional associations and organs which will strengthen the universal approach while giving the regional efforts added vitality.

For my own part I am, for example, looking forward to constructive co-operation in the problems confronting Europe between the United Nations and the Council of Europe, the OEEC and the European Coal and Steel Community. Properly understood and conducted, these organs should, of course, not be in any sense rivals of the United Nations in Europe, either in the political or in the economic life of the continent. They are parts of the larger whole and the building of the parts should contribute to the building of the whole. In fact, some of the most imaginative and creative leadership in international affairs over the past eight years has been manifested in this European movement.

Other examples of constructive political developments outside the technical framework of the United Nations but for purposes in line with the aims of our Organization are offered by various high level conferences between the leading statesmen of Member nations. There again we meet a problem and ^{face} possibility. When inspired by the aims which have found expression in the Charter of the United Nations, and animated by a sense of responsibility to the world community, such conferences take a proper place in the general United Nations effort and may serve to strengthen the Organization itself.

Having said all this, I must, however, add a word of warning. We know that world inter-dependence is inescapable. And world inter-dependence requires world organization. We know that the fact that we have been catapulted, as it were, into a world of close neighbourhood without the necessary historical preparation to be good neighbours makes effective world organization a problem of supreme difficulty. The United Nations is a young institution. To fail to use the United Nations machinery on those occasions when the Charter plainly means that it shall be used, to improvise other arrangements without overriding practical and political reasons — this may tend to weaken the position of the Organization and reduce its influence and effectiveness, even when the ultimate purpose is a United Nations purpose. So there is a balance here that must be struck with care.

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No institution can become effective unless it is forced to wrestle with the problems, the conflicts and the tribulations of real life. Of course we must use discretion, we must avoid overloading a young institution, we should, in fact, use greater restraint in asking the United Nations to undertake tasks that may be desirable in themselves but are secondary to the great issues. But on those great issues we should not use other approaches simply because these may seem in the short view more expedient or convenient. We must not let the United Nations become a mere hostage to the conscience of the Member States, a shrine at which obeisance is paid at the appropriate seasons while the real action goes on elsewhere. The works are as important as the faith and the faith, embodied in the United Nations, will not find the expression that the world needs so desperately without a living and developing institution that commands respect and loyalty from the peoples and the governments of the world in steadily growing measure.

What I have said has already brought me far into the question of "The Way Ahead." Let me now turn to the concrete problems and immediate realities, turn from questions of direction and organization to the question of the landscape we have to pass. Our point of departure should be the experiences at the Eighth Assembly, which adjourned last week.

The Assembly convened in an atmosphere of cautious hopefulness. After all, this was to be the first regular session following what was interpreted as a turn for the better in the international climate. Would there be a willingness to test and use the opportunities provided by the United Nations to explore the possibilities for rapprochement, for thawing the walls of ice which divide the world? Or would the discussions only lead to a renewal of old recriminations, leaving us in a world of fixed positions as frozen in their seeming irreconcilability as before?

Judgments may differ, but I think that on the whole most of us would agree that the Assembly, until its very end, neither fulfilled the hopes that many nourished in the beginning, nor marked any retrogression. It was a session characterized by caution -- a caution that prevented far-reaching steps in any direction but also diluted the effects of harsh debate on several bitterly contested issues.

One reason for this was that the centers of gravity of international action on the main political issues of the cold war were at Panmunjom and, toward the end of the Assembly, at Bermuda. There was a prevailing desire not to introduce complications into a situation that was delicate and tense, pending a clearer indication of the outcome of the negotiations for a Korean Political Conference and a Four Power Meeting of the Foreign Ministers.

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issues, not directly related to the East-West

Also on other conflicts but of few significance for the future relationship of the West with Africa and Asia, the key note was one of restraint. There were no significant changes and there was no fundamental change in positions.

On the economic side, the under-developed countries as well as many supporters of the United Nations everywhere, were disappointed at the lack of progress in the practical mobilization of governmental and private resources for the investment of capital in economic development. What was achieved after long debate was only to endorse the principle and keep alive the blueprints for a more propitious time.

As concerns the delicate question of the status of the international Secretariat and the problems concerning its independence, which have arisen mainly because of the American loyalty investigations, decisions were reached which should give us a new start. Although these decisions closed the previous, controversial chapter, and although I feel that we can look to the future with greater confidence, the way in which — and the circumstances under which — these decisions can now be implemented, will finally decide whether they represent the step forward we are hoping for.

While the Assembly was in session the Security Council had to investigate two questions relating to the complicated situation in Palestine. The decision of the Council on the shocking and deplorable Qibya incident reaffirmed the concern of the Council for the general situation in the Near East and its interest in a peaceful development, but it did not, and could not at this time, contribute to a solution of the basic problems. The outcome of the initiative taken by Israel in this context, that is to call on the Secretary-General to convene a conference on the Armistice Agreement between Israel and Jordan, will undoubtedly be of significance for coming developments.

In all these respects the United Nations during the past 12 weeks essentially only marked time. And it is natural to ask the questions: where are the bold decisions, where are the signs of marked progress, how has the United Nations asserted itself as the forum for all peoples in the development of a policy of peace and economic and social advancement?

The questions are natural, but they do not provide a good basis for an appraisal of the United Nations and of its significance in the world situation of today — or tomorrow. Impatience is a useful good, but a very poor guide. There are times when it is political wisdom, in the best sense, to mark time.

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The security policy of the United Nations is a policy aiming at a solution of international conflicts by negotiations, the Charter and under the moral pressure of world opinion the General Assembly and the Security Council. It is, further, represented in the policy of collective resistance to aggression.

This general security policy is at present under a special test in different ways in two cases, to which I have already referred — the case of Palestine. This autumn there was no basis for "bold" action by the United Nations in either of these cases. The United Nations had shown the courage — and did show the courage — of restraint. The time for action will come. Its influence is at work in connexion with the Korean peace conference and it will have to show its spirit and its resourcefulness in the reconstruction of Korea. Its influence may have to be exerted at the Israel-Jordan conference, and it will have to show true statesmanship in the solution of the long-term problems of the Near East, guiding developments towards a peace safeguarding the just interests of all the peoples concerned. As challenging problems, Korea and Palestine will certainly engage the United Nations in a most serious way for a long time ahead.

On the overriding political issue of our day — the Cold War — the possibilities of the United Nations were not put to a test until the very end of the Assembly — and that test is for the future. The "East-West" issue was deeply sensed as the background of several of the questions debated earlier, such as the question of new members and the representation of China, the question of preparations for a revision of the Charter, and the problem of disarmament. I have already referred to the restraint shown in these and other cases. This may be interpreted — and I would like thus to interpret it — as an indication that all parties had in their minds and wanted to safeguard the potentialities of the United Nations as an invaluable, indeed unique instrument, if and when there is a chance for a truly international, constructive approach to the underlying conflict. And these potentialities might easily have been harmed by unwise or premature actions or reactions.

This positive interpretation of the situation received support at the very end of the Assembly session. President Eisenhower in his speech last week struck a note which may be said to have been the first response to the challenge facing the United Nations at this Assembly, fully on a level with the hopes voiced in many quarters at the beginning of the session.

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President Eisenhower's proposal did not pretend the impossible -- to resolve at one stroke, and in the face of all the unresolved East-West conflicts, the problem of the control and elimination of atomic weapons. This was a proposal to begin on a modest scale, under the auspices of the United Nations, the universal sharing of fissionable materials for peacetime uses -- a proposal for a new beginning toward the ultimate resolution of the central problem of our time -- as he put it, "to find the way by which the miraculous inventiveness of man shall not be dedicated to his death, but consecrated to his life." But beyond that, the President affirmed in most concrete terms his belief in the possibility of a world where peoples can live together in peace and mutual tolerance. The fact that he chose the United Nations General Assembly as his platform for these statements seems to me to be of great significance.

The speech of President Eisenhower reflected basic purposes of the United Nations in international life. The Charter is at once a supreme standard against which the worth of the policies of governments must always be measured and an evocative force constantly summoning these policies in more positive and constructive directions. The Organization is a tool -- or rather a set of tools -- by which the governments, in their efforts for peace and in their programs of practical co-operation, may enlist as time goes on stronger and stronger battalions for the use of the creative power of mankind for human betterment, against the threat of self-destruction that faces our civilization. May the governments, in the great question which the President approached in a new and constructive way, find methods to surmount the serious complications with which his proposals so obviously are fraught.

The United Nations has always recognized that its efforts in the political sphere to build a world without fear will succeed only if based on a solid foundation of economic and social justice within the nations and among nations. To a great extent the work of the Organization itself and of other members of the United Nations family has been devoted to the improvement of economic and social conditions. I need not remind you of the important contributions in this sphere made by such bodies as the World Health Organization and the International Labour Office.

One of the great pilot ventures on which the United Nations itself has embarked, in co-operation with the Specialized Agencies, is the Expanded Technical Assistance Program. A few months ago the Technical Assistance program -- so modest in financial terms, so fraught with potentialities for good as a living demonstration of the constructive force of the international community -- was threatened with serious curtailment because of the preoccupation of many governments with

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what seemed to be more pressing problems of power, position and survival. But once the danger of this curtailment became evident, what happened? The total pledges for 1954, as stated at the recent pledging conference, exceeded last year's. The number of contributing countries increased. Almost a score of countries increased their contributions. The Soviet Union and other Communist countries contributed for the first time. This is a development within a limited area, that is true, but yet a striking confirmation of general faith in the contribution that can be made by the United Nations to the building of a world of justice and peaceful progress, to lifting the lives of all men to a level worthy of man.

The last days of the year are often days of new intentions and new hopes. If, in concluding, I should try to formulate my hopes for the immediate future, I might say this:

I hope for a growing recognition of the basic aims and aspirations of the United Nations. Thus I hope for a growing understanding of the fact that the peace to be achieved cannot be imposed on the world by the authority of any international body but is the result of a positive development of our attitude to life and to our neighbours and of the economic and social conditions under which the major part of humanity lives.

I hope for a growing recognition of the potentialities of the United Nations family of institutions as a unique -- and an effective -- set of tools in the hands of peoples and governments in their effort to build up the attitudes and to create the conditions necessary if we are to get peace.

I hope for a growing recognition of the special administrative, technical and diplomatic problems facing those who work in and for the United Nations in their effort to increase and to utilize those potentialities.

We know that we must in the months ahead seek in every way, inside and outside the United Nations, to reduce the tensions in Europe and the Far East and to move closer to the basis for an acceptable co-existence. In the meantime we must carry on and seek to develop further all those programs of constructive international co-operation for peaceful progress that may now or later be open to us, whether they be in United Nations technical assistance, in the peacetime possibilities of atomic energy, in growing regional political and economic co-operation, or in such humanitarian endeavors as the United Nations programs for children and refugees.

If we will proceed patiently and resolutely along these lines, we shall find that the momentum of our movement will year by year bring stronger confirmation of our faith in the capacity of mankind to build in time a world without fear.