

GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

MEETING

Wednesday, 22 November 1972,
at 11 a.m.

NEW YORK

Chairman: Mr. Hady TOURÉ (Guinea).

AGENDA ITEM 41

Comprehensive review of the whole question of peace-keeping operations in all their aspects: report of the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations (A/8669, A/8676, A/8888, A/SPC/152)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to begin its consideration of agenda item 41. The Committee had before it the report of the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations (A/8888), and a letter from the representative of the Soviet Union to the Secretary-General (A/8669) transmitting a document entitled "Basic guiding principles for the conduct of United Nations Peace-keeping operations, including United Nations observer missions"; a letter from the representative of the United States of America (A/8676) transmitting a memorandum on the establishment and conduct of United Nations peace-keeping operations authorized by the Security Council; and a letter from the representative of Canada (A/SPC/152) transmitting a memorandum on the command and control of peace-keeping operations.

2. He appealed to all members of the Committee to make their statements on the subject as soon as possible, so that the Committee could complete its consideration of the item early the following week.

3. Mr. OGBU (Nigeria), Chairman of the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations, said that peace-keeping operations were one of the principal reasons for the existence of the United Nations, but that the formulation of adequate procedures which would enable the Organization to carry out the role which its Charter entrusted to it in that area gave rise to serious problems. It could not be claimed that the Special Committee, whose reports to the Special Political Committee had for several years reflected only the complexity of the problems it faced, had successfully solved them. Nevertheless, the establishment of the Working Group in 1968 had been a step in the right direction. The frank exchanges of views which were possible within the Working Group, and the willingness shown by members of the Special Committee to reach agreement on basic issues, were encouraging factors; however, no solution was, or ever had been, possible without the agreement of the major Powers.

4. A certain amount of progress had been made: work on drawing up model I,¹ relating to United Nations observer missions, was continuing—although slowly—and agreement had been reached on certain aspects of the model. It was regrettable that work on the formulation of model II could not be begun before work on model I was completed. He drew attention to paragraph 7 of the Special Committee's report (A/8888), which noted the consensus reached among its members in June 1972 with regard to the election of a Chairman and the increase in the number of officers and of members of the Working Group, which marked a step forward in the Special Committee's work and would now enable it to deal with the substance of the main remaining problems. If the Special Political Committee decided to recommend that the General Assembly should renew the Special Committee's mandate, the Special Committee could undertake fruitful negotiations and exchanges of views geared to the completion of model I.

5. Although he did not ignore the great differences of opinion among members of the Special Committee and of its Working Group, he noted their willingness to come together in several areas of the discussion. He was convinced that the inflow of fresh ideas made possible by the increase in the number of officers and the enlargement of the Working Group would promote real progress. It was of great importance, both for the United Nations and for the world at large, to restore the Organization's capacity to carry out various kinds of peace-keeping operations. For that reason, he appealed for co-operation from all Members of the United Nations, especially members of the Special Committee and of its Working Group: he was convinced that if only States, and especially the great Powers, genuinely wished to achieve the desired goal, their representatives in the Special Committee would be able to find the means to do so.

6. Mr. KASSEM (Egypt), Rapporteur of the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations, introduced the report of that Committee (A/8888). He said that in spite of the numerous consultations held by members of the Special Committee and its Working Group, the Special Committee had failed to complete the programme of work assigned to it by the General Assembly. Nevertheless, from the procedural point of view, the Special Committee had reached agreement on the election of a new Chairman and the enlargement of the Working Group.

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-fourth Session, Annexes*, agenda item 35, document A/7742, annex.

7. With regard to substance, he stressed that the Organization's reduced effectiveness in maintaining peace and security was due much less to an institutional handicap within the Organization itself than to the general reluctance of Member States to call upon the United Nations or to respect its authority in matters in which they were directly involved. The Organization's over-all performance in its security role was still impaired by the lack of basic agreement among Member States, and especially among the permanent members of the Security Council. For progress to be possible, the gap between those divergent positions must be closed, particularly in matters relating to policy and operations.

8. That was not to say that the United Nations was condemned to impotence in the maintenance of international peace and security, which remained the Organization's fundamental task. However, in view of its very complex nature, the question would, if it were to be examined thoroughly, take up much more time than had ever been spent by any other United Nations body in dealing with other tasks. In addition, the mandate entrusted to the Special Committee was of such a delicate and political nature that the lack of agreement among the great Powers, which was paralyzing the Special Committee, could be settled only when a favourable political climate and appropriate circumstances had appeared.

9. The tasks of the Special Political Committee was to prepare the necessary ground for the achievement of an early agreement on peace-keeping operations. To that end, it should once more urge the Special Committee to accelerate its work. With time, and with the introduction of new ideas from which the Special Committee and its Working Group would probably benefit from 1973 onwards, those favourable political conditions would prevail and progress would at last be possible.

10. Mr. FRAZÃO (Brazil) said that, at the current session of the General Assembly, the work of the Special Committee at last gave grounds for a certain amount of optimism. If, unfortunately, no progress had been made on substantive matters, the Special Committee had at least managed to settle the institutional problems in which it had been involved for almost two years and which had largely been due to the lack of a Chairman. By regularizing its procedures and electing its officers, the Special Committee had not only settled a formal matter: it had shown a political will to tackle the matters of substance under its mandate. In the United Nations as elsewhere, matters which initially appeared to be questions of form were in fact questions of substance. That conviction had led the Brazilian delegation the previous year to criticize strongly the unorthodox procedures followed by the Special Committee and to take an active part in the consultations which had produced a regularization of the situation. At the same time, questions of procedure were never an end in themselves, and should not be allowed to distract attention from the real problems, which remained unsolved.

11. The Special Committee had been established by the General Assembly in 1965 by its resolution 2006 (XIX), after the failure of the Working Group on the Examination of the Administrative and Budgetary Procedures of the United Nations to devise appropriate solutions to the financial problems deriving from the operations of the United Nations Emergency Force and of the United Nations Operation in the Congo. While that Working Group had been almost exclusively concerned with their financial aspects, those problems had been clearly political; their solution depended on agreement among States on a set of comprehensive guidelines for future peace-keeping operations. So that the study of the problem would not be over-restricted, the Special Committee had been asked to undertake a comprehensive review of the whole question, on the understanding that its immediate task would be to seek ways and means to restore the solvency of the Organization. Although that objective remained to be achieved, interim solutions had been agreed upon, and the United Nations had been able to resume its activities. The Special Committee's emphasis had been shifted to the consideration of organizational and political issues, and the elaboration of comprehensive norms which, if adopted, would preclude the possibility of further disagreement over the financial implications of peace-keeping operations. However, from 1966 to 1970, the work of the Special Committee had made no progress and agreement had only been possible on aspects of model I operations, while the most important aspects of peace-keeping—operational, legal and financial—remained unsettled. It might seem surprising that that situation persisted when no Member State had challenged the basic assumption that the United Nations should be provided with the necessary means to put into effect a monopoly of the use of force in international relations, which it legally enjoyed under the Charter. Brazil, which had already participated in five peace-keeping operations, felt a particular sense of responsibility in that regard, and his delegation had at all times sought to contribute to the progress of negotiations. Indeed, Brazil attached such importance to the matter that it had suggested that the goals, principles and scope of peace-keeping operations should be incorporated in the United Nations Charter, between Chapters VI and VII. It was unquestionable that, if it lacked a set of principles defining the political and juridical framework for the conduct of peace-keeping operations, the Organization would be unable to implement the purposes of the Charter or to assume its responsibilities in a field which related to Chapter VII but yet was not fully covered by the provisions of Chapter VI.

12. Moreover, until the Charter established adequate guarantees against the use of force, general and complete disarmament would remain a myth. In that context, it was worth recalling that the joint statement of agreed principles for disarmament negotiations, worked out in 1961 by the Soviet Union and the United States of America, included, in paragraph 7, the provision that progress in disarmament should be accompanied by measures to strengthen institutions for maintaining peace and the settlement of international disputes by

peaceful means and that the necessary measures to maintain international peace and security should be taken, including the obligation of States to place at the disposal of the United Nations the manpower necessary for an international peace force.² Unfortunately, those praiseworthy declarations and attempts had not led to any result: no effective system of collective security had yet been devised, and States were still engaged in a costly and sterile arms race. Peace-keeping was, in fact, inextricably linked to disarmament and to the strengthening of international security, and his delegation believed that progress in the cause of peace-keeping would require a perspective much broader than the one which had prevailed so far. The United Nations must soon formulate a doctrine to guide peace-keeping operations, or it would have to go on relying on pragmatic solutions, which had in the past led to unfortunate political consequences for the Organization. His delegation had no magic formula to propose. It must be recognized that a solution to the current deadlock would depend on the political will of a few Powers, particularly the permanent members of the Security Council. But other nations could not wait passively for that political will to materialize. To the extent that the operational capabilities of the United Nations in the field of peace and security still depended on the unanimous will of the great Powers, it was certainly unlikely that peace-keeping operations would be resorted to in the settlement of any dispute between them; yet those operations were of considerable importance to the vast majority of medium and small States. They were the ones that must press for the establishment of an agreed "normative framework" for peace-keeping operations—in other words, a system that could provide all States with assurances against external threats and with a political and legal guarantee that their sovereign rights would be respected. For the medium and small States, their national existence itself was at stake, whereas for the great Powers the question was merely one of political prestige.

13. The documents circulated at the current session proved the importance attached to the question by Member States. The notes by the Secretary-General (A/AC.121/L.15 and Add. 1 to 3) transmitted the replies of numerous Governments, and the documents circulated independently by the Soviet Union (A/8669), the United States (A/8676) and Canada (A/SPC/152) contained over-all appraisals and specific proposals which merited careful consideration. The positions of the various delegations were now clear; a number of them, including his own, had submitted concrete proposals on particular topics. The Assembly now had before it three models worked out by the Soviet Union, the United States and Canada. In his delegation's view, the positions of those three countries were not irreconcilable. While the Soviet proposal envisaged a somewhat cumbersome decision-making and decision-implementing process and involved a profusion of vetoes, it nevertheless included some interesting suggestions. The United States proposals, notwithstanding

a certain degree of rigidity reminiscent of the immediate post-war period, represented a step forward. The Canadian proposal, which constituted a conceptual framework designed to accommodate as far as possible the diverse positions put forward by other Member States on this matter, might be said to place too much emphasis on the Military Staff Committee and to be not altogether clear in distinguishing the responsibilities entrusted to the Secretary-General and to the Security Council. However, it included some original ideas and opened possibilities for constructive debate, and his delegation had already indicated its appreciation to the Canadian delegation. Mention should also be made of the proposals put forward by the delegation of Japan in its reply to the Secretary-General (see A/AC.121/L.15/Add.1), which contained some pertinent remarks that would be of great help to the future work of the Committee.

14. Having in mind the complexity of the problem and the excessive restrictions that the Working Group had imposed on its activities, his delegation proposed that the Working Group, with the help of the Secretariat, should prepare a document containing, in the first place, a description of the progress so far achieved and, secondly, a comparative listing of concrete proposals submitted by Member States. Originally, his delegation had expected to have such a document submitted at the current session to the General Assembly, which would thus have had a clear picture of the status of negotiations in the Special Committee and in the Working Group and would be in a position to transmit its comments to the Committee and possibly provide it with guidelines for future action. On the basis of the working paper prepared by his delegation, the Working Group had held a constructive exchange of views and had decided to entrust the Rapporteur with the task of preparing the required comprehensive listing by January 1973 (see A/8888, annex, para. 5). His delegation had agreed to that compromise, since by setting the target date of January 1973, the Working Group had shown its willingness to start deliberations early in the year and, at long last, to proceed in a methodical way. Moreover, by preparing that document, it would be able to discuss substantive issues, which had not been the case for a considerable time. The document so prepared could subsequently be circulated to the members of the Special Committee and, at a later stage, to the General Assembly and would thus help to bring to the attention of the Members of the United Nations the long-forgotten technicalities of peace-keeping negotiations. Thus, his delegation's objectives would be achieved.

15. With the preparation of that document, the Special Committee and its Working Group would be in a position to make a serious attempt at fulfilling their mandate. Either some progress would be made or agreement would prove impossible; in the latter case the members of the Committee must have the courage to face the truth and come before the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session with an admission of failure. The current deadlock was perhaps due to the machinery adopted or the approach being followed. Perhaps the debate on peace-keeping operations should never have

² *Ibid.*, Sixteenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 19, document A/4879.

been separated from the questions of disarmament and the strengthening of international security, which were dealt with in the First Committee. Perhaps new and politically more productive way to dispose of that question could be devised. In any case, his delegation believed that the General Assembly should renew the mandate of the Special Committee for one year. However, if the same situation persisted in 1973, then either the consideration of the question would have to be restructured, as he had just suggested, or the General Assembly would have to work out some other machinery for the purpose.

16. The twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly would provide a favourable opportunity for an over-all review and appraisal of negotiations on peace-keeping. At that time the General Assembly would consider the first report of the special committee charged with examining the possibility of convening a World Disarmament Conference.³ If current trends continued, 1973 might see the building-up of mechanisms that would make the relaxation of international tensions less dependent on the will of a few. Lastly, and most importantly, some States might enter the United Nations and others might make known their views on the question of peace-keeping operations. A promising situation might well be in the offing, and the United Nations must seize the opportunity. His delegation would spare no effort towards that end.

17. Mr. RAE (Canada) expressed disappointment at the report of the Special Committee (A/8888) and the annexed report of its Working Group. Owing to the exceptional difficulty and delicacy of the issues raised, no appreciable progress had been made during the past three years on the peace-keeping questions covered by the Special Committee's mandate. But the issues were important ones, involving the fundamental *raison d'être* of the United Nations, namely, the maintenance of international peace and security through collective action.

18. However, there was no reason to despair, for not only had the procedural crisis concerning the composition of the officers and Working Group been resolved but, in addition, General Assembly resolution 2835 (XXVI) had evoked a series of replies by Member States, some of which indicated that previous attitudes had changed. There was reason to hope, therefore, that the progress interrupted in 1969 would be resumed.

19. He wished to illuminate some aspects of peace-keeping discussions by a few comments on the memorandum submitted by Canada (A/SPC/152, annex), which had not yet been examined either by the Special Committee or its Working Group. The principal purpose of the Canadian paper was to provide a conceptual framework within which the central dichotomy in the main approaches to command and control of peace-keeping operations might be overcome. Those approaches

seemed to be fundamentally opposed, even contradictory. Canada believed, however, that they could be accommodated in a coherent system, even if that was done at the cost of keeping the system in a state of dynamic tension.

20. One view that had always been held was that full control over peace-keeping operations should be vested in the Security Council, both in respect of policy decisions and day-to-day operational activities. According to that view, that was the only realistic way of proceeding when the interests of the major Powers were involved. The opposing view was that although over-all authority in that area might belong to the Security Council, day-to-day operational authority should be vested in the Secretary-General, that being the most practical way of ensuring that operations would be satisfactorily and expeditiously implemented. The Canadian authorities, which had had considerable practical experience in peace-keeping operations, had come to the conclusion that both views had substantial elements of truth, and that it should be possible to accommodate them in a system which would permit a workable operation to be carried out. Canada had endeavoured to find a basis of shared responsibility, and, since the whole matter hinged on the question of command and control, it had directed its efforts primarily to that question.

21. But such a conceptual framework did not represent a final position on the part of the Canadian Government, for if specific mechanisms were identified with positions of principle, the problem would be insoluble. The Canadian authorities had sought to work out mechanisms that were different from those examined in the past, taking due account of all the positions of principle defended over the past eight years, without rigid adherence to any one or other schematic approach. The Canadian authorities had confined themselves to the operations identified as model I and model II, i.e. those authorized by the Security Council, involving either military observers or contingents. They had not tried to devise a system for solving disagreement in the Security Council. The conceptual framework put forward applied only in situations where the Security Council remained in agreement throughout a given operation.

22. The approach adopted by Canada was an examination of the possibilities of using the Military Staff Committee, suitably adapted for current needs and supplied with the necessary infrastructure. That examination was based on paragraph 175 of the Secretary-General's introduction⁴ to his annual report on the work of the Organization, issued in September 1971. There had been two main reasons for such an approach. First, Canada was reluctant to encourage the proliferation of United Nations organs. Secondly, it considered that the Military Staff Committee was sufficiently fully defined in the Charter and that, when dealing with a subject as sensitive as peace-keeping, the more firmly an action was anchored to the Charter, the less would

³ Special Committee on the World Disarmament Conference, subsequently established by the General Assembly under its resolution 2930 (XXVII).

⁴ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 1 A*.

Member States have to fear for their vital interests, so that they would be prepared to consider variations and innovations.

23. The essence of the Canadian proposal, therefore, was that the Security Council, while retaining its overall direction and control over an operation, should use the Military Staff Committee as its executive agent. The Military Staff Committee could in turn be supported by an international headquarters staff appointed by the Secretary-General and reporting through him. In normal operational conditions, the international headquarters staff would be the channel of communication between United Nations Headquarters and the commander in the field.

24. If the machinery outlined was regarded by some as cumbersome, his delegation was prepared to examine the matter in the Working Group. But it wished to point out already that a certain loss of mechanical efficiency was the price to be paid for greater political acceptability. The Canadian document was nothing more than a working document and his delegation hoped that it would stimulate discussion and encourage Member States to further creative thinking. The appointment of the representative of Nigeria as Chairman of the Special Committee, and the new composition of the officers and Working Group of the Committee, offered reasonable hope that, if the mandate of the Committee was renewed, its report for 1973 would be very different from the current one.

25. Mr. KIMBERG (Denmark) said that Denmark, which had been a member of the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations since 1970, regretted, as did the Committee itself, the slow progress made during the past three years in achieving agreed guidelines on United Nations peace-keeping operations in accordance with the Charter. However, in paragraph 12 of its report (A/8888) the Special Committee seemed to strike a note of cautious optimism on the subject of the work it could undertake if the General Assembly renewed its mandate. Denmark supported the renewal of the mandate of the Special Committee and shared its optimism.

26. The Special Committee had indeed succeeded in solving the crisis which had prevailed for more than two years. The difficulties, though formal in nature, had none the less been a cause of the lack of progress. His delegation had agreed to the enlargement of the Working Group, though it had some reservations as to its somewhat unbalanced composition. It hoped that a spirit of compromise would prevail in the Special Committee when it resumed its deliberations in January 1973.

27. The contents of paragraph 5 of the fifth report of the Working Group—which appeared as an annex to the Special Committee's report—offered further grounds for cautious optimism. His delegation noted with appreciation the first step agreed upon in the Working Group. It looked forward to following closely

the discussions in the Working Group and to playing a constructive role when the reports of the Working Group, which it hoped would be frequent, were submitted to the Special Committee. While it realized that agreement between the great Powers was an essential prerequisite for future peace-keeping operations, it must maintain that in that field all members had duties and responsibilities that could not be shirked.

28. The request made in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 2835 (XXVI) had elicited more than a dozen replies, including documents submitted by the Soviet Union (A/8669), the United States of America (A/8676) and by Canada (A/SPC 152). There was therefore plentiful material for preparing "a comprehensive listing under specific headings of concrete proposals received" (see A/8888, annex, para. 5). His delegation considered that the compilation of all the concrete proposals put forward would provide a good starting-point for the discussions in the Working Group of the Special Committee.

29. In its reply to the request of the General Assembly in operative paragraph 4 of its resolution 2835 (XXVI), Denmark had reminded Member States that it had established in 1964 a stand-by force permanently at the disposal of the United Nations (see A/AC.121/L.15, annex). Detailed information about that force was to be found in a letter with an annexed memorandum, both dated 20 March 1968.⁵ The Danish stand-by force was an integral part of a Nordic stand-by force. Co-operation between the Nordic countries included participation in United Nations peace-keeping operations. A study on the Nordic stand-by forces would be communicated to the United Nations at a later date.

30. The Danish Government considered that peace-keeping was one of the principal functions, if not the most vital one, of the United Nations. His delegation hoped that the mandate of the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations would be extended and that the Special Committee would make a renewed collective effort to break the deadlock and enable the United Nations to fulfil its functions.

31. Mr. CARSALES (Argentina) noted that again during the current year the Special Committee had made no substantive progress in its work. Its only achievement had been the election of a chairman and the enlargement of the membership of the Working Group, which was entrusted with seeking ways and means of reaching agreement on the direction, management and financing of peace-keeping operations. Furthermore, as the Working Group, thus reconstituted, had resumed its work only shortly before the opening of the current session of the General Assembly, it had not had time to determine whether the possibilities of progress were now improved. However, little consolation could be derived from the experience of the past few years. To reach an agreement, there must at the outset be some convergence, or at any rate the

⁵ Document A/AC.121/12 (mimeographed).

possibility of a reconciliation of views on several points of fundamental importance, and that did not yet seem to be the case. However, his delegation did not consider that the possibilities of narrowing the gap between the various views were exhausted.

32. The Special Committee and its Working Group should again be given the opportunity of achieving that limited objective. However the General Assembly should, without undue delay, and perhaps at its twenty-eighth session, thoroughly reconsider, in the light of the results which would be achieved during the

coming year, the utility and advisability of indefinitely prolonging an effort to bring about something that seemed unattainable in the existing circumstances. It must not be forgotten that the Special Committee could be useful only as a framework within which agreements might be reached that made an important contribution to the organization and execution of peace-keeping operations. If it was to be merely a forum for theoretical discussion, however subtle and clever, it could serve no useful purpose.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.