

UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



Distr.
GENERAL

A/6400

1 September 1966

ENGLISH

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH/FRENCH/
SPANISH

Twenty-first session

APPOINTMENT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS*

Letter dated 1 September 1966 from the Secretary-General to all
Permanent Representatives to the United Nations

In pursuance of the undertaking I have given in public to inform the members of the Security Council by the end of August 1966 of my decision in regard to my willingness to serve for a further term as Secretary-General of the United Nations, I transmit herewith, at the same time as I am sending it to the members of the Security Council, a copy of my statement.

(Signed) U THANT
Secretary-General

* Item 18 of the provisional agenda.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Members of the Organization are aware that my term as Secretary-General of the United Nations expires on 3 November 1966. During recent months I have had exchanges of view with many of them, including in some instances Heads of State and Government. I believe that it would be proper for me and helpful to the Governments of Member States to make my own decision known at the present time.

In this connexion it may be pertinent to recall that in the first instance I was appointed Acting Secretary-General of the United Nations for the unfinished term of Dag Hammarskjöld from 3 November 1961 to 10 April 1963. In November 1962, when the question of the extension of my term was under consideration, many members of the Security Council as it was then constituted asked me to accept a further term of five years from the date of expiry of that mandate, until 10 April 1968. I expressed my preference to serve a term of five years from 3 November 1961, the date of my appointment as Acting Secretary-General, to 3 November 1966. In taking this attitude I had two considerations in mind. One was to reinforce the practice already established that the normal term of the Secretary-General should be five years. The other was my reluctance to accept a commitment to serve as Secretary-General for a longer period than five years.

I would also like to avail myself of this occasion to refer briefly to some of the problems which the Organization has had to face since I was first appointed to this office. Though I am making these observations at this time, I do not wish to relate them to the variety of considerations - personal, official and political - which, as I have explained more than once, have influenced my own decision.

Members of the Organization may remember that, on 30 November 1962, when I accepted the extension of my term to 3 November 1966, I referred to a statement I had made earlier that "my decision to accept the position of Secretary-General for a longer term would be governed primarily by a few considerations, including the prospects of an early settlement of the Congo problem, the prospects of the stability of this world Organization as a potent force for peace, and the

prospects of my playing a humble part in bringing about a more favourable atmosphere for the easing of tension ...".

Looking back over the work of the United Nations during the last fifty-eight months I feel justified in saying that a measure of progress has been made in some of these respects.

In particular, while the financial solvency of the Organization has not yet been assured, there is no longer the same sense of crisis and anxiety about it. I am still hopeful that, in line with the decisions taken earlier by the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations and the General Assembly, and in the light of the recent report of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies, substantial voluntary contributions will be forthcoming which will place the Organization on a basis of complete solvency, so that it can face the great tasks ahead with confidence.

The need of the United Nations for solvency does not, however, apply to the question of finances alone. A lack of new ideas and fresh initiatives and a weakening of the will to find means of strengthening and expanding genuine international co-operation would have even more serious consequences. In respect of one of its most important activities, that of peace-keeping, the promise held out by the demonstrated usefulness and success of our extensive operations in recent years has remained unfulfilled because of the continuing failure to agree on basic principles. In my judgement it is important that, in conformity with the Charter, the United Nations should be enabled to function effectively in this field.

The task of peace-building is no less important. In this regard it may be claimed that, while the United Nations Development Decade, which was launched with high hopes, has fallen short of its modest objectives, on the positive side it has stimulated the efforts of the United Nations to equip itself with more effective means - the consolidated United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Organization for Industrial Development - of tackling some of the basic problems of development.

Speaking still of the situation within this Organization, I may say that during all these months I have striven to make the Secretariat more truly international in outlook and approach and a more energetic and efficient servant of the Governments of Member States. I believe that, within its limitations, the Secretariat has performed well and that, with further organizational improvements, it is capable of doing even better. I take this opportunity to place on record my deep appreciation of the co-operation I have received from my colleagues in the Secretariat.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to my friends and colleagues in the delegations for their unfailing co-operation and courtesy. The progress made during these fifty-eight months is due in large measure to their friendly counsel and assistance.

Members of the Organization are surely aware of my abiding concern for peace. During the fifty-eight months that I have been in office, hopes and prospects have risen and fallen many times. The world situation appears to me to be extremely serious. The state of affairs in South-East Asia is already a source of grave concern and is bound to be a source of even greater anxiety, not only to the parties directly involved and to the major Powers but also to other Members of the Organization. It is of the deepest concern to me personally. The cruelty of this war, and the suffering it has caused the people of Viet-Nam are a constant reproach to the conscience of humanity. Today it seems to me, as it has seemed for many months, that the pressure of events is remorselessly leading towards a major war, while efforts to reverse that trend are lagging disastrously behind. In my view the tragic error is being repeated of relying on force and military means in a deceptive pursuit of peace. I am convinced that peace in South-East Asia can be obtained only through respect for the principles agreed upon at Geneva in 1954, and indeed for those contained in the Charter of the United Nations.

Elsewhere in the world, too, there are signs of growing tension. While the situation in Europe has shown signs of improvement, the state of affairs in many other parts of the world has undergone some deterioration. The increasing imbalance in the world economic situation, to which I have constantly drawn

attention, most recently in my statement to the Economic and Social Council, can only add to the clear and present dangers.

I must also confess to a sense of dissatisfaction with the fact that the Organization has not yet achieved universality of membership. I believe I am not alone in this feeling. Many of the problems facing the world today, be they regional or global, become more intractable because of this circumstance. This is true, for example, of the lack of progress in such vital fields as disarmament.

It thus happens that, owing mainly to the international situation and to circumstances beyond the control of the Organization, no decisive progress has been made by the Governments of Member States in the co-operative efforts which are essential if the Organization is to serve effectively the cause of peace and to contribute significantly to the economic development of the poorer regions of the world.

I now come to the question of my own plans for the future. I have been greatly touched, indeed overwhelmed, by the many kind references to my work which have been made at the level of Heads of State and Government, as well as on an informal and personal basis by my friends and colleagues. If I have not found it possible to accept their urging to be available for a further term of office, it is not for lack of appreciation and gratitude for their sentiments. It is my belief, as I have said more than once in the past, that a Secretary-General of the United Nations should not normally serve for more than one term. I have similarly made it known that I do not believe in the concept of indispensability of any particular person for any particular job. In the circumstances the conclusion I have reached will, I hope, be understood by all my friends and colleagues: I have decided not to offer myself for a second term as Secretary-General, and to leave the Security Council unfettered in its recommendation to the General Assembly with regard to the next Secretary-General.

I am sure that my own unwillingness to be available for a second term as Secretary-General will not be misconstrued by those who know me. I have an abiding and unshakable faith in the United Nations and in its ultimate success.

Despite the difficulties facing the Organization, I believe and hope that the world will continue its efforts to develop the United Nations as an indispensable instrument for the attainment of a peaceful and just world order. In this task, I pledge my personal support and whole-hearted devotion.