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ON THE
WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION

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

After nearly three years as Secretary-General of the United Nations, I am more convinced than ever of the need to preserve and strengthen the Organization as a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations. I also believe that an extended and tolerable future for all humanity ultimately depends upon our success in making the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations the basis of the day-to-day relations of Governments and peoples. On the eve of our fortieth anniversary, in this, my third, report on the work of the Organization I intend to examine the basic premises of our activity in the United Nations which is the practical embodiment of the concept of multilateralism.

The original intent of the United Nations was to provide a framework in which Governments of differing persuasions could, in their wisdom, work out solutions to international problems and, if necessary, together take action to put those solutions into effect rather than engaging in conflict. As the Preamble to the Charter puts it, the main purpose was, and is, "to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security". The basic assumption was that all nations had a vital common interest in peace and in an orderly and equitable world and would be prepared to co-operate to achieve it.

Unfortunately the history of post-war international relations has so far shown that the common interest in peace and security has tended to assert itself only when things have reached a dangerously critical stage. Until that stage short-term national interest and opportunism tend to override the common interest. We are still very far from general acceptance of the principles of the Charter as rules to be lived by at all times by all Governments in their international relations.

In these circumstances, it is paradoxical that while contemporary realities have strengthened the need for the use of multilateral means for dealing with our problems and enlarged the scope for growth and development through multilateralism, there is an increasing questioning of the rules, instruments and modalities of multilateral co-operation. There is also, on occasion, an apparent reluctance to make the effort required to use international organizations effectively.

The past year has been a time of great-Power tension accentuated by a lack of progress in disarmament and arms limitation which has heightened fears of nuclear confrontation; of violence or threatened violence in several parts of the world; of continued economic difficulties in spite of a recovery in certain developed countries, and a deterioration in the situation of many developing countries; of drought and famine in several regions; and of a tendency to side-step major problems in a way which is likely in the long run to increase frustration and bitterness. Virtually nothing that has happened has shown that these problems can be solved effectively by purely bilateral or unilateral efforts.

Why has there been a retreat from internationalism and multilateralism at a time when actual developments both in relation to world peace and to the world economy would seem to demand their strengthening? We need to consider this question carefully if we are to make our institutions work better. I hope very much that political scientists and intellectuals the world over, as well as political leaders and diplomats, will ponder this essential problem on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations.

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After the Second World War there was admittedly a certain over-confidence in the capacity of international institutions, born of a desperate desire to build a new and better world. It then seemed possible to establish, as a first priority, a system for maintaining international peace and security under the provisions of the Charter. If such a system could become effective, the main obstacle to disarmament and arms limitation, the insecurity of nations, would be removed, and the rule of law rather than the rule of force would at last begin to come into its own on the international level. With these co-operative achievements a world community would have come into being, capable of directing its affairs by reason and enlightened self-interest. The system would include equitable economic institutions and steady progress in social justice and human rights.

What has happened to that majestic vision? It was soon clouded by the differences of the major Powers. The advent of atomic weapons brought with it a new doctrine of security based on nuclear deterrence, a doctrine which was not taken account of when the Charter was drafted. Moreover, the world turned out to be a more complex, far less orderly place than had been hoped at San Francisco. The problems of post-war international peace and security were less clear cut and less susceptible to the kind of international action envisaged in the Charter. The forces of nationalism and fears for national security, far from abating after the Second World War, were soon very much on the increase. The international community's inability to solve many of its problems, whether political or economic, even when it could agree in principle on what the solution should be, gave rise to a process of side-stepping the United Nations and recourse to other measures — force, unilateral action or confronting military alliances — which weakened reliance on the Organization.

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In looking back, however, it would be a grave mistake to underestimate, or simply take for granted, what has been achieved and what is now being done by the United Nations system. During a period of revolutionary change it has accomplished a great deal for the betterment of the human condition.

The United Nations has played a decisive role in the process of decolonization which has brought independence to hundreds of millions of people. The Security Council has throughout its existence considered many of the difficult problems of conflict in the world and on a large number of occasions has come up with a basic formula on which their solution might be based. It has also taken numerous actions to limit and control conflict. Peace-keeping operations have successfully controlled violence in a number of critical areas. Nor should we forget that, although there have been a

number of regional conflicts, their escalation into global conflict has been avoided. Even on the most difficult question of disarmament and arms limitation a number of agreements have in fact been reached.

The United Nations Development Programme, together with the specialized agencies, has come to represent a vital source of economic and technical assistance for developing countries. The United Nations Children's Fund has brought life and hope to millions of children and mothers and is the leading influence in furthering technological and communication advances that can bring a virtual survival revolution for children in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The specialized agencies have, in their various fields of activity, made major contributions to the alleviation of global problems.

The United Nations has provided authoritative definitions of the fundamental rights and freedoms which all human beings should enjoy. It is responsible for the development of the Convention on the Law of the Sea which provides a broadly accepted new régime for the oceans. In the past 40 years more has been done by the United Nations in codifying international law than in all the previous years of history together. Millions of refugees have gained protection and assistance through United Nations instruments and agencies; international humanitarian activity and concern have been mobilized on an unprecedented scale; guidelines have been established to deal with many of the most critical problems of our time, and the Governments and peoples of the world have been sensitized to their importance through the great international conferences and programmes which the United Nations has sponsored, the most recent of which was the International Conference on Population held in August this year.

All of these accomplishments required a multilateral structure of co-operation. Moreover, in some situations the United Nations, or the Secretary-General, remains essential to communication between the parties. I think, for example, of Cyprus, over which at this moment I am engaged in a new effort to find a just solution; of Afghanistan, the Iran/Iraq war and South-East Asia. The critical value of peace-making and peace-keeping efforts would be instantly evident if they were to cease. It is essential, in considering our problems, to remember the positive side of the United Nations account and to keep in perspective politically-motivated criticism.

However, for all of the accomplishments of the past decades, and they have been major, the fact of the matter is that the three main elements of a stable international order — an accepted system of maintaining international peace and security; disarmament and arms limitation; and the progressive development of a just and effective system of international economic relations — have yet to take hold as they should.

In dealing with the most vital problems of the widest concern, we often witness heated rhetoric rather than a reasoned co-operative approach. In such an atmosphere, which extends far beyond the Organization, the United Nations, which should be used to provide constructive solutions, provides a convenient target of criticism.

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The United Nations reflects in a unique way the aspirations and frustrations of many nations and groups all over the world. One of its great merits is that all nations — including the weak, the oppressed and the victims of injustice — can get a hearing and have a platform even in the face of the hard realities of power. A just cause, however frustrated or disregarded, can find a voice in the United Nations. This is not always a well-liked attribute of the Organization, but it is an essential one.

What needs to be studied in the light of experience is whether present practices in the United Nations are in all instances best suited to promote concrete and just solutions and strengthen confidence in an Organization the essence of which is its universality. If confrontations in the deliberative organs are carried too far, either by one side or the other, they destroy the possibility of a consensus which could form the basis for practical action. I am totally in sympathy with the pursuit of just aspirations, however great the difficulties. But for the good of all, as well as of the United Nations itself, we should assess very carefully the most effective and correct method of using the Organization. The United Nations is a willing and patient horse, but it should not be ridden to a standstill without thought of the consequences.

We should beware of blurring the separate and specific functions of the main organs and specialized agencies by treating them as interchangeable platforms for pursuing the same political aims. Issues must be dealt with primarily on their own merits and in their own context. Otherwise the fever of one or two issues can pervade the entire body politic of the United Nations.

The non-implementation of resolutions, as well as their proliferation, has tended to downgrade the seriousness with which Governments and the public take the decisions of the United Nations. Very often the only outcome of such a process is to ask the Secretary-General to make yet another report to the next session, thus perpetuating a stalemate which, to be resolved, requires governmental and intergovernmental action. This process. and the almost automatic repetition of some agenda items and debates, is expensive and time-consuming both in terms of meetings and documentation, as well as often being ineffective in terms of practical results. I believe that such tendencies have been debilitating to the efforts of the Organization in the cause of peace and economic co-operation. I hope that Member States, even during the forthcoming session of the General Assembly, will give serious thought to the best way of doing business.

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Two years ago in my first annual report I made a series of suggestions as to how the Charter system of international peace and security might be made to work better. Although the Security Council has devoted many hours of thoughtful consultations to these and related ideas, concrete results are still needed for which the impetus must come from the highest political levels. I feel that the realization of the full potential of the United Nations depends upon a willingness to take active steps to experiment with new approaches.

In recent years the collective capacity and influence of the Security Council have been insufficiently tested. There are important issues where the members of the Council, including the permanent members, hold substantially similar views. And yet other factors not directly related to these problems inhibit the Council from exerting collective influence as envisaged in the Charter.

The same consideration applies to peace-keeping. We are often urged to strengthen the peace-keeping capacity of the United Nations, the implication being that this is a matter that can be handled without regard to the political relations of Member States and particularly of members of the Security Council. A number of lessons have been learned recently about the nature of peace-keeping, but it is essential to emphasize the fundamental issue. Peace-keeping is an expression of international political consensus and will. If that consensus or will is weak, uncertain, divided or indecisive, peace-keeping operations will be correspondingly weakened. There are occasions when the differences among members of the Security Council even make it impossible to

take any peace-keeping action at all. The strongest peace-keeping operation would be one which had the unreserved support, political, diplomatic and financial, of *all* the Members of the United Nations and even the actual participation of the permanent members of the Security Council under the mandate of the Council. This may be unrealistic at present, but it is also the political truth which indeed applies across the whole range of the activities of the Organization.

I give the example of peace-keeping to demonstrate the process by which internationalism becomes discredited in the public mind. Peace-keeping is one of the more successful innovations of the United Nations. But when this technique cannot be used in a situation which obviously requires it, because the members of the Security Council are divided on the matter, the public generally concludes that there is something wrong with the United Nations and with the concept of internationalism. This conclusion is, of course, easier than analysing the conflicting positions and motives of Governments which are the real cause of the impasse and of the failure of the United Nations to act or to respond.

I do not have any simple solutions to offer to this problem. Obviously a radical improvement in the international political climate would make a profound difference, but we cannot rely on miracles. In the mean time we could perhaps work on a few ideas for improving the situation, on the assumption that our common and agreed objective is human survival in reasonably decent conditions.

I myself have put forward some ideas and suggestions on a number of issues — about Lebanon, for example, and the Middle East problem — but the reactions so far have been mixed. I notice that there is a tendency at present in the direction of bilateral or unilateral action, or no action at all. And yet bilateral or unilateral approaches do not seem to be noticeably effective in most cases. Nor is this surprising, for by their very nature many of the disputes that we face around the globe require the building of a wide consensus if solutions are to hold.

I suggest that we review the current tendency in relation to specific situations. I very much hope, for instance, that we shall see real — and long overdue — progress in proceeding to the independence of Namibia on the basis of the United Nations plan. I also hope that in the coming months we shall see the full and concrete co-operation and positive action which are needed to ensure the success of the untiring efforts which the Contadora Group is making for peace in Central America.

In many disputes accusations and counter-accusations are freely traded over a situation which, to most people, is mystifying and complex. What harm would be done if United Nations teams were dispatched to clarify and certify what the real facts are? Surely such clarification of the situation by objective observers might help to reduce international tension and strengthen other efforts. Let us ask ourselves what useful steps can be taken in a given situation rather than starting by thinking of all the extraneous reasons why they *cannot* be taken.

Most of all we need to reaffirm the Charter concept that threats to international peace and security, from whatever source or in whatever region of the world, override ideological or other differences between States and entail an obligation on all States to agree and co-operate. Under the terms of the Charter some situations clearly require immediate consideration and action by the Security Council regardless of political disagreements. Surely one such situation is when a national frontier is violated and the State concerned calls for United Nations action.

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There must of course be a substantial improvement in the international climate if there is to be meaningful progress in the limitation and reduction of arms. This is a field in which it is essential to utilize the full potential of multilateral *and* bilateral negotiations, both to improve mutual understanding of the reasoning behind military postures and negotiating positions and to reach substantive, balanced arms regulation and disarmament agreements. During the past year there has been little sign of movement in this direction, and the arms race has continued to burgeon both qualitatively and quantitatively.

It is only realistic to recognize that nuclear disarmament will depend primarily on agreement among the nations having nuclear weapons, especially, and beginning with, the two most powerful. It is equally true, however, that success or failure in the reduction of nuclear weapons can have a most important bearing on the future of the entire international community. To approach nuclear disarmament exclusively as a factor in the relations of the nuclear Powers and their allies is to do injustice to the broad and grave responsibility that the possession of nuclear weapons carries with it. It is also unfortunate and, I believe, unnecessary to allow the course of disarmament negotiations on the whole range of issues in the multilateral forums to be largely governed by tension stemming from other causes. The fact is that progress on the issues included in the agenda of the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, and especially on those currently before the Conference on Disarmament, could help to restore confidence and improve the critical bilateral relationship on which the international political climate so heavily depends.

It is especially valuable in times of tension that a multilateral structure is available within which nations, despite their differences, can come together for dialogue and serious negotiations, whether in the General Assembly, the Security Council or the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. In fact, the possibility exists in that Conference for nuclear and non-nuclear countries to work together towards agreement on such vital subjects as measures to avoid nuclear war, the prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests, the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and the complete prohibition and destruction of chemical weapons. If, instead, the Conference is used mainly for the public presentation of rigid positions and rhetorical exchanges, the potential of this broadly representative negotiating forum will be largely wasted. I urge all concerned — East, West, non-aligned and neutral alike — to recognize that the need for disarmament measures — both nuclear and conventional — is too compelling to allow this to happen.

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Let me turn to another aspect, namely, multilateral co-operation through the United Nations in the economic and social spheres. We are here in the presence of a slightly different set of political realities and in a predominantly North-South dimension. Global economic relations have changed significantly since the immediate post-war years when most international economic institutions began their work. There has been growing frustration among the developing countries, a large international constituency which has looked upon the institutions of multilateral economic co-operation established after the Second World War as insufficiently responsive to the needs of those countries. This perception has been strengthened in light of the serious economic difficulties which have affected them in the 1970s

and early 1980s. Their attempts in the United Nations, through an essentially political process, to obtain changes in that system have not had the desired results, as shown by the failure to launch global negotiations. It is in a way comprehensible that some developed countries, whose influence in those institutions has been paramount, should find this shift difficult to accept and should tend to favour retaining the existing institutional structures and decision-making machinery as they are.

It is easy to criticize United Nations economic institutions because such institutions often fall short of their high aims. Conflicting national interests in a time of flux and change make such a falling short virtually inevitable. Nevertheless, multilateral co-operation has already achieved much, most of it taken for granted as soon as it is achieved. In an economically interdependent world where the growth and stability of the North is intertwined with accelerated development of the South, it is hard to see how international economic problems can be solved, except through intensified multilateral co-operation. Despite the difficulties involved in such co-operation, it is short-sighted to turn away from the concept of multilateralism and the institutions which embody it.

There is a distinction to be made between United Nations operational activities in the field of development at the national level where much is being achieved, and activities at the *global* level, in trade, money and finance, for example, where there is a high degree of frustration.

The support provided by the United Nations system for development, excluding the World Bank, now amounts to over $2 billion a year. High priority is given to the low-income countries with particular attention to the problems of the poorest of the poor. In a period of restricted resources, continuous efforts are being made to ensure more effective operational co-operation within the United Nations system.

It should be mentioned that in the domain of "global" issues, the "achievements" of the Organization cannot be measured simply in terms of the number of treaties and agreements negotiated and signed. Of course, there have been many of these. But many of the contributions of the United Nations are in less tangible forms: for example, the extent to which the United Nations has succeeded in raising global consciousness on key issues, the critical situation in Africa being a case in point, or in shaping the framework of international debates on major problems. For instance, I have consistently stressed the importance of finding solutions to the acute debt problem that go beyond the short term and that take into account the need to ensure growth in the export earnings of developing countries. It is, similarly, in no small measure due to the discussions on the International Development Strategy that the world community today gives a high priority to the cause of development which, in its simplest form, must be understood to mean the raising of the living standards of the vast majority of mankind in this interdependent world, and in a manner that benefits the global economy as a whole.

This aspect of the work of the United Nations has recently met with some doubts and criticisms. These need to be faced. Where substantive issues are raised, they need to be adequately debated, and misunderstandings dispelled. Otherwise, the normal functioning of important organs of the United Nations will be impaired. One of these, for example, relates to the complex issue of the relative roles accorded in United Nations discussions to Governments and to the private sector.

Another matter frequently raised is the extent to which issues that are essentially economic and technical are politicized in the United Nations. I have mentioned one aspect of this problem earlier in this report. There is another aspect. In the present world few issues in human affairs can be regarded as completely unpolitical. Nevertheless, the extent to which economic issues are politicized in the United Nations should also be understood as a reflection of the frustrations which developing countries feel in their long attempt to reshape their economic destiny. The absence of global policy-makers—i.e., politics in the best sense—to meet this need is also a factor in this frustration. There is an additional factor: many Governments feel that only when economic issues are politicized will they attract the attention of the highest level of decision makers. And many economic issues are so complex that only decisions at the highest levels can make any significant impact in the current situation.

The difficulties which the community of nations experiences in strengthening economic co-operation in the United Nations stem from a number of causes. A new consensus on economic issues in the light of world economic and political realities has not yet emerged. There is disagreement on the cause of the trouble as well as on what to do about it. Ideological differences on economic problems futher complicate the issue. But the absence of a consensus, which will take time to emerge, need not prevent progress in critical areas.

These are not difficulties which can be ignored or willed away. The world is not just one country or one point of view. If we are serious about the future, this is the context in which we need to seek practical solutions to both short-term and long-term problems. Patience, perception and persistence are more relevant to this search than relentless criticism whether from one side or another. Human solidarity demands these qualities. If we do not address current economic problems seriously and urgently, we will not be able to confine them to the economic sphere alone. In our world of growing economic interdependence, impoverished people faced perpetually with a variety of overwhelming economic and social crises constitute not only a challenge to international conscience, but a threat to international stability as well.

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Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is one of the basic principles of the United Nations. A human rights philosophy based on the concept of an international rule of law pervades the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the codifying instruments adopted by the United Nations since its establishment. These instruments are the yardstick for measuring regard or disregard for human rights.

In this area, too, we constantly encounter trenchant criticism. I welcome such criticism in the hope that it will spur everyone, including the critics, on to a more serious assessment of the importance—and the difficulty—of reducing injustice in an unjust world, of promoting development in a world divided between rich and poor, and of instilling the virtues of mercy and compassion into people many of whom are fighting—or believe they are fighting—for their lives.

I spend much of my time, sometimes with encouraging results, on human rights and humanitarian problems, which I regard as uniquely important. Despite the existence of definitive norms developed within the United Nations, perceptions differ greatly. One person's freedom fighter is another person's terrorist; one's champion of human rights is another's subversive; one's plaintiff is another's criminal. The reality is that many are dispossessed, many confined, many tortured and many starve. This is the world we have to deal with.

In the field of human rights, gross violations, such as the system of *apartheid*, are obviously the first priority for the

Organization. In addition, it is my concern to help individuals whose human rights may have been violated. In particular, I seek to facilitate the release of those who may have been imprisoned or sentenced for political reasons. The criteria for judging such efforts must be whether they advance the cause of human rights and not whether they serve the political interest of one side or another.

The primary responsibility in this important matter rests, of course, with Governments which have entered into firm commitments towards each other and towards their peoples to respect internationally recognized standards proclaimed by the United Nations. We must try to create the conditions which will encourage all Governments to ensure respect of human rights in accordance with those standards. At the same time, we should examine existing United Nations practices and consider ways and means to make them more effective in dealing with gross violations of human rights wherever they occur.

The question of human rights is closely linked with the humanitarian activities of the United Nations. It seems to be a general rule that in times of recession or other difficulties, the weakest developing countries suffer the most, and the weakest groups in those countries are the most vulnerable of all.

In such cases, multilateral action through the United Nations is essential to alleviate the plight of the victims — action parallel to and co-ordinated with the remarkable work of non-governmental agencies. Various institutions within the United Nations system, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, as well as the specialized agencies, have done much in this field.

During the past year, the United Nations has focused attention on two major problems. In December 1983, I launched an appeal for help to the many African countries which were facing the worst drought in the twentieth century. The Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa in July of this year was another manifestation of multilateral co-operation in dealing with urgent social and humanitarian problems.

It is essential that we learn from our experience to approach future humanitarian problems in a coherent manner which takes account of all their elements. We must develop better means of alleviating and preventing crises. We must improve our capacity to provide humanitarian assistance quickly. In order to establish an early warning system, I have requested the heads of the various agencies of the United Nations as well as those of my field offices to inform me, on an urgent basis, of any situation which in their view could give rise to a major humanitarian crisis. Such a system should enable the United Nations to react to cases of emergency more adequately and speedily. The problems are enormous, but I believe that the level of public and governmental consciousness of the need to provide assistance in great humanitarian tragedies is growing. It is a fundamental responsibility of the international community to come to the aid of its least fortunate and most afflicted members.

The growing problem of narcotic drugs has become a major international anxiety, not least because of its effect on the future of children and young people. It has become more and more evident that international and multilateral efforts provide the best hope for arresting and reducing the traffic in and use of drugs, which have such appalling effect on both individuals and the societies in which they live. The institutions of the United Nations system, in co-operation with Governments and other groups concerned with the problem, are actively working to deal with it. Greater effort is needed, however, and, for my part, I have taken steps to improve the co-ordination within the United Nations system of this vital activity.

Finally I wish to mention the steady increase in various forms of politically motivated violence, including hijacking, kidnapping, car-bombing and assassination. Our society is in some sectors becoming an armed camp. Order, civility and even public life are under serious threat in many parts of the world. As usual, the toll of innocent victims is appalling. It is not enough to deplore or condemn or try to control such acts of violence. Attention has also to be focused on ways of dealing with the root causes of these phenomena.

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The machinery of international co-operation must be serviced by an efficient and solid secretariat. One of my priorities is to improve the efficient functioning of the Secretariat, so that I may be able to satisfy Member States that all necessary human and other resources — but not more than is needed — are available and are being effectively used. To this end, last year I asked some of my senior colleagues to advise me on measures that could be taken to improve the administration and functioning of the Secretariat. On the basis of their advice, I have now decided on a number of actions designed either to increase efficiency or reduce costs, or both. For example, I have directed that there shall be a temporary suspension of recruitment. I shall report on these matters to the General Assembly in greater detail shortly. I very much hope that the Assembly will be mindful, in the resolutions it adopts, of my objectives.

The success of any programme for administrative improvement requires the active co-operation not only of all the members of the Secretariat but also of the Member States themselves. To this end I intend to ascertain the views of the membership on a number of approaches which I believe could with advantage be explored.

The General Assembly will be called upon to consider this year a number of issues of personnel policy including, in particular, those concerning salaries and other conditions of service of the staff. Different points of view inevitably will arise, and indeed have already been expressed to me, on the adequacy of these conditions of service. I am sure that Member States will recognize that the achievement of the highest standards of competence and integrity called for by the Charter requires corresponding and appropriate conditions of service.

The current system of salaries, allowances and pensions extends far beyond the United Nations itself. It affects all the agencies which, with the United Nations, participate in what has come to be known as the "common system". The General Assembly has repeatedly stressed the need to preserve and promote that linkage, without which the recruitment and administration of staff for the many participating organizations would be a chaotic exercise. The common system is also one in which a number of organs — notably the International Civil Service Commission and the Joint Staff Pension Board — have a regulatory role to play. I am confident that the discussion in the Assembly on these issues will take these facts into account.

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In considering the purpose and necessity of multilateralism, we should not forget that national interest generally stands first in the priorities of Governments. There is also, however, a growing sense of the *international* interest, the common good of humanity, and the preservation and wise stewardship of the world's resources for the benefit of future

generations. That is why there is a widespread commitment to the United Nations and a general interest in making the Organization work better. Quite naturally different Governments or groups of Governments have different ideas about the work of the United Nations and wish it to work on *their* terms. To make the United Nations work better, what is needed, above all, is a determined and persistent effort to strike a balance between national and international interest.

In conclusion, therefore, I wish to repeat my call for a multilateral and rational approach to the problems of international peace and development. I believe that this is what the peoples of the United Nations really desire in spite of all the difficulties and irritations encountered by Governments in trying to make a multilateral system work. It is widely understood that without such a system we shall run unacceptable risks and that it is therefore irresponsible to weaken the multilateral approach. Without the safety net which multilateral organization provides, the world would certainly be a much more dangerous and disorderly place.

In the United Nations we have now had nearly 40 years of experience, 40 years of change, and, for all the conflict of our time, 40 years without a global war. Let us look back at the road we have travelled, distil the experience and set out again refreshed and with a new determination. The purposes for which the United Nations was set up are essential for the future of our planet. The vision expressed in the Charter remains, and we should rally to it.

Javier PÉREZ DE CUÉLLAR
Secretary-General