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Forty-first session

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE THIRTIETH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Thursday, 9 October 1986, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. CHOUDHURY (Bangladesh)  
later: Mr. MATTURI (Sierra Leone)  
(Vice-President)

- General debate [9] (continued)

Statements were made by:

Mr. Sinamenye (Burundi)  
Mr. Ould Minnih (Mauritania)  
Mr. Wolde (Ethiopia)  
Mr. Sceberras Trigona (Malta)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 9 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE

Mr. SINAMENYE (Burundi) (interpretation from French): Mr. President, may I first join those who have already expressed their genuine pleasure at seeing you preside over our work. Your outstanding qualities will be sorely tested during this session, in which a number of decisions will have to be taken to ensure a future for our Organization. I am convinced that your wisdom, calm and patience will ensure the success of this important session.

While congratulating you on your unanimous election to the presidency of the forty-first session of the General Assembly and the fourteenth special session devoted to the question of Namibia, my delegation welcomes the fact that the Assembly should have chosen a national of a country renowned for its devotion to the principles of non-alignment. I can assure you of the whole-hearted co-operation of my delegation.

I should like also to pay a well-deserved tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Jaime de Piniés of Spain, for his work as President of our Assembly. His term of office, which coincided with the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of our Organization, was marked by the onset of a financial crisis which risks shaking our Organization to its foundations unless an appropriate solution is found. It was also a time when we experienced events which were as serious as they were unexpected. Suffice it to recall the natural disasters which occurred around the world, particularly in Africa, and the serious armed conflicts between States Members of our Organization which have tarnished that period, not to mention the problem of terrorism.

We are pleased to note that throughout those tragic events which loomed over the international scene the Secretary-General was unsparing in his efforts

(Mr. Sinamenye, Burundi)

to seek greater stability, peace and justice the world over. I believe this is the time to pay a well-deserved tribute to him for the many initiatives which he has launched.

For some days now we have been hearing a series of analyses offered and themes developed by outstanding orators who have spoken from this rostrum. They have, with clarity, precision and awareness of the gravity of the situation, broached the various political and economic topics of particular urgency.

(Mr. Sinamenye, Burundi)

At the United Nations, as in other international and regional organizations in which we are involved, the Republic of Burundi strives to contribute to all deliberations and every initiative involving our commitment to justice and peace. After all, it is the noble duty of the Assembly to inspire hope and find solutions for the various conflicts, wars and other disputes that are, alas, the daily lot of our time. Burundi will strive to make its modest contribution.

If we are not careful, our world will find itself on the brink of total conflagration.

The first powder-keg is to be found in southern Africa. That part of the African continent is the epicentre of numerous upheavals that have spread beyond the borders of South Africa and Namibia, engulfing the neighbouring States. The international community has denounced the scourge that is at the root of this situation and that bears the name apartheid. South Africa is the only country in the world in which the military machine is used almost exclusively for the purpose of harassing peaceful people. Incapable of containing the explosive situation that exists within its own borders, the Republic of South Africa is planning and exporting war and desolation in the neighbouring countries. It professes and practices the policy of recourse to force.

The world, stunned, recently denounced the incursions for the purpose of destabilization by the Pretoria régime into Botswana, Lesotho, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Those acts of aggression have added complication to the covert war it has been imposing on the peoples of Angola and Mozambique ever since they won their independence. No neighbouring independent country has been spared Pretoria's armed adventurism. The recent intimidating declarations by the Pretoria régime regarding the possible imposition of comprehensive mandatory sanctions have increased our fears as to that régime's true intentions.

(Mr. Sinamenye, Burundi)

To meet this situation of permanent war the front-line countries are compelled to devote considerable resources to self-defence, at the expense of their urgent development needs. The price paid by those peoples to sustain the liberation struggle in South Africa and Namibia has become a crushing burden. We take this opportunity to pay a tribute to the courage and determination of the peoples of that part of the world. The international community must redouble its efforts and give further proof of its solidarity by helping to reduce the impact of Pretoria's acts of sabotage.

In this context we appeal to the international community to support and contribute generously to the fund set up at the Eighth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries to help the front-line countries resist invasion, colonialism and apartheid.

The question of Namibia is the second subject of concern on the African continent. We welcomed with understandable hope the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 435 (1978) establishing the United Nations plan for the independence of Namibia. For once, those that truly have the power to check South Africa's arrogance and are capable of persuading it to co-operate with the international community joined the ranks of those States that want to see Namibia take its place among free, sovereign nations.

However, to the great disappointment of peoples that cherish peace and freedom, South Africa's major political and trading partners have since had recourse to various tactics to delay the independence of the Namibian people. The Government of Burundi has always said, and now repeats, that the question of Namibia is one of decolonization pure and simple, that the illegal armed occupation by South Africa and the plundering of the resources of Namibia by that country and its allies seriously jeopardize international peace and security. We have always

(Mr. Sinamenye, Burundi)

denounced, and again denounce, any tendency to analyse and define the Namibian question through the distorting prism of a confrontation between ideological blocs. We must not put the Namibian people between the hammer and the anvil of the of vain East-West rivalry and the ephemeral quest for commercial profit, when what is really at stake is the independence and future of an entire people.

The nations of the world will appreciate that the alleged risk of the spread of communism in southern Africa cannot be overcome by the installation of destructive, reactionary fascism.

The international community has long been calling for the imposition on racist South Africa of comprehensive mandatory sanctions in accordance with the provisions of Chapter VII of the Charter. We remain convinced that this is the only way of breaking the spiral of violence and initiating genuine dialogue among the peoples concerned with a view to bringing about a lasting settlement of the problems of that tormented part of Africa.

Notwithstanding our many attempts to deal with the matter, the most recent of which were in Paris last June, in Vienna at the beginning of July and at the fourteenth special session, which concluded its work some two weeks ago, a certain number of countries with special responsibility in the realm of peace-keeping and the maintenance of international security obstinately refuse to envisage comprehensive mandatory sanctions and evade the question of the independence of Namibia. Happily, the position taken by the international public has provided some degree of hope and encouragement.

The Government of Burundi reaffirms its total support for the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), the sole, authentic representative of the Namibian people, whose persistence in the struggle compels our admiration. The people of Burundi have no doubt whatsoever that our brother people of Namibia will attain victory in the end.

(Mr. Sinamenye, Burundi)

In north-west Africa the just and determined struggle being waged by the Saharan people for the exercise of its right to self-determination and the enjoyment of its other fundamental rights will lead inexorably to victory. It is regrettable that so far the relevant resolutions of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations recommending direct negotiations between the parties concerned, that is, the Kingdom of Morocco and the POLISARIO Front, have not yet been implemented. However, we welcome the talks, even though only indirect, taking place under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General in consultation with the OAU.

Elsewhere in the world the scene is no more reassuring. Certain conflicts persist and are taking on alarming proportions.

In the Middle East, the Palestinian people has not yet regained its homeland and is continuing its heroic struggle to achieve self-determination. It is clearly established that the Palestinian problem is at the heart of all the upheavals shaking that part of the world and that until a just and equitable solution has been found for it there will be no lasting peace in that part of the world.

In Lebanon, the various protagonists have turned that country into a veritable battlefield. The people of Lebanon too is entitled to peace. It desires only to heal its wounds without outside interference in its strictly internal affairs.

Not far from Lebanon, the war between Iraq and Iran has lasted for six years and has already taken a heavy toll in human lives and material damage. The people of Burundi firmly believes in the virtues of moderation, the efficacy of negotiation and the search for peaceful solutions to all disputes between nations. It once again exhorts our Iranian and Iraqi brothers to turn to peaceful means compatible with the Charter of our Organization to put an end once and for all to their present conflict.

(Mr. Sinamenye, Burundi)

Just as we preach moderation and concord, we have always refused to sanction invasion and the occupation of any country by foreign troops. The people of the entire world should rather set out on crusades against hunger, poverty, ignorance and disease. The only battles we can admire are those that are waged for the development of nations and for the full development of the potential of the individual.

We remain convinced that the crises afflicting Afghanistan and Kampuchea, like the precarious and rapidly deteriorating situation in Central America, would give way to restored normalcy if all States again made it their business to abide by the norms of international law.

For that reason we support the efforts of the Secretary-General with regard to the questions of Cyprus and Afghanistan, the talks aimed at the peaceful reunification of the two Koreas, and also the initiatives of the Contadora Group.

By the same token, the States Members of this Organization should resolve to keep their defence systems within reasonable limits, establishing a sensible balance between resources used for armaments and those devoted to development; but above all they should avoid the geographical proliferation of nuclear weapons with massive destructive potential. We welcome the convening of the forthcoming meeting at the highest level between the two super-Powers to relaunch disarmament negotiations. We also exhort the other nations with advanced nuclear technology to dedicate themselves to utilizing the potential of the atom exclusively for peaceful purposes and for social and economic development.

The imperative need to consolidate peace and stability in order to ensure social and economic development in our countries is undeniable. Indeed, the conjunction of particularly disadvantageous political and economic factors is undermining the efforts of many countries to extricate themselves from the current crisis.

(Mr. Sinamenye, Burundi)

Stricken harder than others, the developing countries in general and those in Africa in particular have been compelled to undertake painful reforms to restructure their economies to overcome their economic difficulties and crushing external indebtedness. In this connection, the recent special session on the critical economic situation in Africa, held last May, allowed for detailed discussion of the dimensions of the economic crisis on that continent. It made it possible to establish and adopt priority recovery measures. Burundi, along with other African countries, counts on the support and solidarity of the international community for the implementation of the priority programme for the economic recovery of Africa.

Along these lines, the international community must urgently examine the more and more damaging effect of Africa's external debt. Precisely because of the critical economic and financial situation of that continent, it should be given special treatment. For that reason the Heads of State or Government of the Organization of African Unity decided at their recent meeting to pursue efforts to increase general awareness with a view to bringing about the convening of an international conference for the consideration of this particularly alarming issue.

Burundi knows, from its own experience, that the task of development involves a slow and difficult process for many developing countries, particularly the most disadvantaged among them. Certain development-related constraints have already severely impeded the efforts of my country. We are referring to our land-locked status, our high population density, the limited development of our human resources, the small size of our market and our weak capacity for financing from within. For all these reasons, we continue to need aid from abroad in order to complete the task we are striving to accomplish within our borders. In view of my country's scarce resources, it is vital that priorities be established.

(Mr. Sinamenye, Burundi)

Accordingly, the Government of the Second Republic, headed by President Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, ascribes the highest priority to rural development.

There is an imperative need for the relaunching of the global negotiations, which are now frozen, so as to achieve a consensus on the establishment of a more just and better balanced new international economic order, one which will put an end to the many elements of maladjustment in the current situation. Today there is no reliable alternative to the North-South dialogue, either for the developed countries or for the developing ones. Therefore it is appropriate at this time to launch negotiations that fit directly into the pattern of the interdependence of our respective States.

Our Organization is a useful instrument, tested by time, for the promotion of fruitful dialogue among nations. Above and beyond the criticisms - which are not always pertinent but which have the effect of putting the Organization's credibility in question - all nations, great and small, agree in acknowledging the importance of the noble mission set forth in the Charter.

Dedication to the ideals of the Organization has often been reaffirmed by all States, particularly at the time of the commemoration of its fortieth anniversary. We would therefore be acting in a responsible manner if we gave it all the support it needs, particularly at a time when it is going through the most serious financial crisis in its history.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General of the Organization for having initiated a series of arrangements which have made it possible to cope with the crisis for the time being. The General Assembly, for its part, is preparing to consider the report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts it entrusted last December with the task of analysing the ways and means of improving the administrative and financial efficiency of the Organization. My delegation

(Mr. Sinamenye, Burundi)

welcomes all recommendations and proposals for reform designed to strengthen our Organization's capacity to carry out better its imperative mission and thus preserve this forum for dialogue and the concerting of views, which I hope no one is thinking of abolishing.

Together, inspired by the firm determination to consolidate our achievements, we have always overcome obstacles. At this time, once again, history calls upon us, and we do not have the right to fail it.

Mr. OULD MINNIH (Mauritania) (interpretation from Arabic): Sir, on behalf of President Maouya Ould Sidi Ahmad Taya and the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, I wish to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at the forty-first session. We have cordial relations with your country, Bangladesh, and we are confident that your excellent personal qualities will guarantee the success of our work. I wish also to pay a tribute to the manner in which Ambassador de Piniés of Spain conducted our work during the historic fortieth session of the General Assembly.

I should like also to take this opportunity to pay a tribute to the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General of the Organization, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, on behalf of peace and international stability during the year. I wish him good health so that he may continue his valuable work.

This session is taking place at a time when for the sake of mankind our Organization must work to the utmost to save humanity from backwardness and war and to establish peace throughout the world.\*

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\*Mr. Matturi, Sierra Leone, Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Ould Minnih, Mauritania)

The international financial and economic situation gives cause for concern. The relative improvement this year has been confined to industrialized countries and has had little favourable effect on the economies of developing countries. Consequently there is an imperative need to formulate an international strategy that will deal with the monetary, financial and economic problems that face the world. My country associates itself once again with the Group of 77 in calling on the developed countries to agree to negotiate in a constructive manner in order to arrive at a satisfactory solution to this deteriorating situation. The international community will not be able to eliminate hunger and backwardness as long as so many efforts and so much money is devoted to the arms race, particularly the nuclear-arms race, which could mean extinction for the whole of mankind. Curbing this race is an essential and necessary condition for creating a world where prosperity and peace will replace hunger, poverty and war.

The year 1986 was one of reflection, analysis and study concerning the causes and effects of the international economic situation. In this context the special session on the critical economic situation in Africa held a special place. The problem of development in Africa is an important question for all. It is difficult for the advanced world to continue its growth as long as there is a continent suffering from economic backwardness where so many societies are suffering from famine. It is essential to implement the United Nations Programme of Action for African economic recovery and development, and we must all work hand in hand to make resources available for that purpose.

The reports of the Economic and Social Council of our Organization reveal that in Africa alone there are 185 million people that live in deserts and that 30 million people are threatened by famine. Most of those people are living in the Sahelian region of the continent. Desertification is gaining pace and has already swallowed up 65 million hectares of arable land.

(Mr. Ould Minnih, Mauritania)

Mauritania is among the countries seriously affected by drought and desertification and since the beginning of the 1970s there has been a continuing and steady deterioration of its economy, based on agriculture and livestock rearing, by which the majority of its citizens used to support themselves. The result has been a mass migration from the country to the towns.

To deal with this situation, which has been exacerbated by the crisis in the international economy, and especially the fall in commodity prices, the national leadership of our country, under President Maouya Ould Sidi Ahmed Taya, has drawn up a full-scale development plan to achieve recovery in the vital sectors of the national economy. I wish here to express our appreciation to all the friendly countries, organizations and international agencies that have given us their valuable co-operation in this project.

To assure effective participation by the people in the process of national reconstruction, our citizens are getting ready today, for the first time, to choose their representatives in free municipal elections throughout the country.

Our country is also making a vigorous effort to develop and promote the activities of the regional and subregional organizations that are working to improve the economic situation in the area.

The economic situation in the world is a cause for serious concern, with many countries facing great obstacles to their political options and their hopes of development, and many peoples still suffering from colonization, occupation and acts of aggression. In southern Africa the apartheid régime is still pursuing a policy of violence and aggression. The international community must support fully the national struggle of the people of South Africa to end the system of apartheid, an inhumane system, and to work for the establishment of a democratic society.

(Mr. Ould Minnih, Mauritania)

It is high time also to end the occupation of Namibia, and the United Nations should assume its responsibilities in supervising the process of independence of that country under the leadership of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people, in accordance with Security Council resolution 435 (1978). On this occasion I wish to express our solidarity with the front-line States that face repeated acts of aggression.

In the Middle East Palestine is still suffering from the displacement of its people and the denial of its national rights. The international community has a duty to assist the struggling Palestinian people to achieve its right to establish an independent State on its own soil, including holy Jerusalem, under the leadership of its sole and legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Our Organization should also work to secure the withdrawal from the Syrian Golan Heights and the south of our sister country of Lebanon, which suffers from an occupation designed to destroy its unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and prevent the achievement of a policy of national reconciliation.

My country feels very distressed at the continuation of the tragic war between Iraq and Iran and at the losses inflicted by that war in terms of human lives and material destruction, as well as the daily threat to the security and stability of the whole area. We sincerely call upon both countries to cease all hostilities and seek a peaceful settlement to that war. Our Organization and the countries that have friendly relations with those two States must do their utmost to persuade them and assist them to end the war. I must express here our satisfaction with the positive response of Iraq to the various peace initiatives.

(Mr. Ould Minnih, Mauritania)

The continued problem of the Sahara, north of our border, is naturally cause of grave concern to us. Mauritania, which has friendly relations with the two parties to the conflict, welcomed the contacts that were made this year within the framework of our Organization, and we hope that the desire for understanding and reconciliation between brothers will prevail over war and rivalry. The return of stability and peace to the area will open the door to establishing relations of constructive co-operation within a large, prosperous and unified Arab Maghreb.

As far as the question of Afghanistan is concerned, we call for a prompt political settlement, with the withdrawal of foreign forces and with due respect for the independence and sovereignty of Afghanistan. In that context my country appreciates the good offices provided by the Secretary-General of our Organization.

As far as Kampuchea is concerned, our country renews its support for the relevant General Assembly resolution and affirms the need for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from that country so that the people of Kampuchea can determine their future free from any foreign intervention.

(Mr. Ould Minnih, Mauritania)

We are confident that, through dialogue, the two Koreas will be able to reach a peaceful settlement in keeping with the aspirations of the Korean people.

Central America is still one of the hotbeds of tension in the world. We hope that the peace efforts made by the Contadora Group will bring about the restoration of peace and stability in that important part of the world.

These are but a few of the problems faced by our world today. We are confident that the world will be a better place to live in if all States respect the principles governing international relations set forth in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mauritania would like to affirm its adherence to the principles of good-neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, non-alignment, peaceful settlement of disputes, rapprochement, solidarity among peoples, and support for just causes. Through strict adherence to those vital principles my country is able today to devote its full potential to the process of national construction and to maintain friendly relations and contacts with all peace-loving countries.

In spite of the characteristic insecurity and instability of the international situation in economic and political areas, we should not underestimate the progress made by the world during the past four decades, the period of our Organization's existence. The only way we can build a world of peace and security is to continue the tireless efforts made within our Organization. Man has assumed his responsibility on this earth, and his future will be determined by his efforts.

(Mr. Ould Minnih, Mauritania)

As the Koran says:

"That man can have nothing

But what he strives for;

That (the fruit of) his striving

Will soon come in sight;

Then will he be rewarded

With a reward complete." (The Holy Koran, L III: 31-41)

Peace and blessings be upon you.

Mr. WOLDE (Ethiopia): Permit me, at the very outset to convey to the President the pleasure of the Ethiopian delegation at his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its forty-first session. We believe that his skill, experience, dedication and wisdom will ensure the successful conclusion of this session.

May I also take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the outgoing President, Mr. Jaime de Piniés, for the able leadership he provided to the General Assembly at its fortieth session.

I should like to express our happiness at seeing the Secretary-General, His Excellency Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, back at the helm of this Organization, which he has so ably led for the past five years. His invaluable service to the Organization and his determined efforts in the interest of international peace and security as well as his vision and realism, as demonstrated particularly in his recent report on the work of the Organization, have earned him the respect and admiration of the international community.

The current session of the General Assembly is taking place in rather unusual circumstances and in a less comforting international climate. We say it is

(Mr. Wolde, Ethiopia)

unusual because in the last four decades there have been very few sessions of the General Assembly at which the United Nations has taken such an inward look with a view to overcoming the political challenges and the resulting financial crises facing it. We say it is less comforting because the world is still beset by a host of political, economic and social problems that have defied solution for a long time now.

If this session of the General Assembly is to be one of introspection, then let us all be clear about the causes of the problems afflicting our Organization. The United Nations has been accused of being administratively inefficient and financially wasteful. While acknowledging the fact that there is still more that could be done in order to streamline the administration and economize on its finances, we have to be clear as to what kind of crisis the Organization is facing.

The Ethiopian delegation is convinced that the crisis is not financial; we believe it is essentially political, as was stated by our Secretary-General in his latest report on the work of the United Nations. Indeed, it is a political crisis caused by lingering sentiments and outmoded perceptions inimical to the democratization of international relations, to the recognition of, and respect for, the sovereign equality of nations and to a constructive accommodation of inevitable changes in international relations. These obviously arise from apprehensions in some circles that the multilateral approach to problems and acceptance of changing situations will rob them of their positions of power and unfair privileges. These circles promote and rationalize their perceptions under the convenient guise of protecting the United Nations from "the irresponsible diktat of a mechanical majority".

(Mr. Wolde, Ethiopia)

Such an attitude, I submit, represents a threat to the sovereignty and the national interests of the developing countries. Furthermore, it represents an erosion of faith in the cardinal principles enunciated in the Charter and a negation of the inexorable historical tide of change which, in the last forty years has altered not only the system of international relations, but also the United Nations itself.

Let us therefore resolve here and now to repel this dangerous onslaught against the United Nations in particular and against multilateralism in general. As a first step, we call upon all States to fulfil the obligations they have assumed under the Charter as regards the full and prompt payment of the assessed contributions to the budget of the Organization.

Today, not only are we endeavouring to protect the integrity and enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations, but we are indeed, through the instrumentality of this Organization, engaged in a determined search for solutions to the numerous problems of today's world. One such problem that calls for urgent and effective action is the situation in southern Africa.

The United Nations plan for Namibia's independence, to which the South African régime had initially given its agreement and the sponsors of which are the major Western Powers, remains unimplemented - eight long years after its adoption. Much as the Pretoria régime had never seriously entertained the idea of leaving Namibia, it would be foolhardy to expect that régime to evict itself from Namibia when the most powerful nations in the West give it the assurance, loud and clear, that its refusal to implement the provisions of Security Council resolution 435 (1978) entails no retaliatory enforcement measures.

(Mr. Wolde, Ethiopia)

Ethiopia, even at this stage, believes that the United Nations plan is the only internationally acceptable plan for the peaceful transition of Namibia to genuine independence. It equally believes that unless and until global, comprehensive and mandatory sanctions are imposed against South Africa, that country's régime will have very few, if any, compelling reasons to heed the will of the international community. Those that oppose this peaceful course of action must eventually bear the responsibility for the death, destruction and suffering the inevitable intensification of the armed struggle in Namibia would involve.

What I have said about their responsibility also holds true with regard to the situation within South Africa itself. As was clearly stated by the World Conference on Sanctions against Racist South Africa, held last June in Paris, global, comprehensive and mandatory sanctions offer the only peaceful path for the elimination of the evil system of apartheid. In this regard, we are encouraged by events unfolding all over the world and in particular the Western world. While taking note of the measures taken by some Western Governments further to isolate the Pretoria régime, we cannot but state our conviction that more forceful and meaningful measures must be taken. The conclusions of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group and the complete failure of the ill-fated mission of the British Foreign Secretary to South Africa have deprived those opposed to sanctions of all pretexts for their self-serving position and delaying tactics.

At the same time as it imposes sanctions, the international community is also duty-bound to assist and protect the front-line States, which have contributed more than their share, perhaps, to the liberation struggle in southern Africa.

For our part, we say that apartheid must be dismantled, not reformed, and on its ruins must be established a free and multiracial South Africa, for whose birth its heroic sons and daughters sacrifice themselves daily with the utmost courage

(Mr. Wolde, Ethiopia)

and determination. For their cause, for their struggle and for the noble objectives of freedom and equality, the support and commitment of the people and Government of Socialist Ethiopia will continue to grow stronger until freedom for all South Africans and independence for all Namibians, as well as peace and security for the front-line States, become a reality.

Turning to the situation in the Middle East, we witness another problem: a continuing appalling human tragedy and the endless suffering of the Palestinian people. In our view, the complex nature of the problem demands a comprehensive approach within the framework of an international peace conference, with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Further, we believe that the attainment of a just and lasting peace in the region depends on the restoration of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish a Palestinian State, the return of Israel to its pre-1967 borders and respect for the right of all the States of the region to live in peace within recognized boundaries.

Another matter of serious concern is the grave situation currently obtaining in Central America. At the heart of the problem lies the policy of intervention, which is manifested by support for counter-revolutionary elements against the Sandinista revolution and the national sovereignty of the people of Nicaragua. While deploring the refusal of the United States to abide by the decision of the International Court of Justice, we reaffirm our support for and solidarity with the heroic people of Nicaragua.

We also offer our solidarity to the people of Cyprus and Lebanon, whose sovereignty and territorial integrity are under constant threat. As regards the problem of Cyprus in particular, socialist Ethiopia believes that the convening of

(Mr. Wolde, Ethiopia)

an international conference could provide a viable forum in the search for a lasting solution based on respect for the unity, territorial integrity, independence and non-aligned status of Cyprus, as stipulated in the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Ethiopia also believes that the international community should support the efforts to bring about the peaceful reunification of the Korean people, for the purpose of which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has advanced constructive and useful proposals.

In addition to these problem areas, I cannot but refer to the Iran-Iraq war and the situations regarding Western Sahara, Kampuchea and Afghanistan. Inasmuch as the position of my Government on all these issues has already been expressed from this very rostrum, I shall refrain from stating it once again. Nevertheless, as a hinterland State of the Indian Ocean, my country's concern at the current situation in and around the Indian Ocean must be reiterated, and in this regard we should like to underline the imperative need to convene the International Conference on the Indian Ocean before 1988, as decided upon at the fortieth session of the General Assembly.

As regards the situation in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia believes that only through scrupulous adherence to the fundamental principles of respect for the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, the inviolability of their boundaries and non-interference in their internal affairs can mutual trust and confidence be created and a lasting peace established in the region.

Despite externally inspired, externally organized, externally equipped and armed and externally directed acts of aggression and provocation against the historical unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ethiopia, my Government has for a long time adhered to, and will in the future continue to respect, these

(Mr. Wolde, Ethiopia)

basic principles of inter-State relations. I should like to take this opportunity to call upon all those concerned to do likewise and join Ethiopia in a quest for genuine peace and development for the peoples of the subregion.

Every year at the General Assembly and in different international and regional forums we talk of peace. In public or in private, today peace has become a household word and increasing concern is expressed about it. Indeed, the last session of the General Assembly designated 1986 International Year of Peace. All these, of course, are expressions of the best intent, manifesting an endless quest for peace.

Yet, in present circumstances and at this point in world history one can hardly speak of real peace, for the ever increasing arms race is threatening the very survival of humanity and its civilization. The last 40 years have witnessed the production and deployment of new nuclear-weapon systems with more deadly destructive power and capable of destroying the world many times over. Moreover, we now witness new attempts to extend the frontiers of the arms race into outer space. Ethiopia strongly believes that the security of nations is to be found not in nuclear armament but in general and complete disarmament.

(Mr. Wolde, Ethiopia)

We have, therefore, to focus attention on two priority areas, one of which is the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons. The renunciation of the threat and use of nuclear weapons through a convention would contribute to removing anxiety, fear and suspicion from the tense world situation and to restoring mutual confidence, trust and understanding.

The other priority issue is the immediate conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, which we are convinced will also go a long way to putting a brake on the spiralling arms race. My delegation pays a deserved tribute to the Government of the Soviet Union for the very positive commitments it has made and the measures it has taken in that regard. World peace and human progress demand that a halt be put to all underground nuclear tests and to the dangerous and costly Star Wars programme. In that connection, we commend the six-nation five-continent group for its constructive and timely proposals in the field of arms control and disarmament.

Nuclear security is but a mirage that recedes with each step taken in the futile search for it. Furthermore, the world can ill afford to sustain the arms race, at a staggering cost of \$900 billion a year, while hundreds of millions of people live on the margins of human existence. This fact, of course, underlines the interrelationship between disarmament and development - an issue whose importance cannot be over-emphasized and for whose discussion the proposed international conference must be held without any further delay.

Unless and until the process of genuine disarmament commences, which should be soon, and vital resources are released for the purposes of development, the deplorable economic and social conditions of much of humanity will of themselves pose a grave threat to world peace, no less than that posed by nuclear weapons. It is to be regretted, however, that that grim prospect is not given the urgent attention it deserves by some circles in the developed world. While it is true

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that, in the final analysis, development depends on the efforts of each individual country, it is equally true that it requires a favourable climate of adequate financial and technical assistance, as well as an effective system of international co-operation. That fact can easily be seen with reference to the critical economic situation in Africa.

Africa inherited from its colonial past an economy marked by structural imbalances. Over the years, the situation has been aggravated by the world economic environment, which is characterized by a decline in the flow of external resources and sharply declining prices of primary commodities, with a consequent reduction of export earnings. The accumulation of external debt, with onerous debt service payments, and recurrent drought and creeping desertification have all become severe impediments to Africa's developmental efforts.

The structural imbalances, pervasive low level of productivity and aggravating external factors have interacted for so long as to place Africa in such a weakened position that the dramatic effects of the recent drought are but a manifestation of the fragile nature of the underlying socio-economic structure. The drought merely accentuated Africa's more pervasive structural problems.

While we in Africa appreciate the very positive response of the international community during the critical emergency years between 1982 and 1985, a lasting solution to the problem of Africa calls for the international community's commitment to assist the continent beyond the emergency phase. We believe that it was this realization that led to the convening of the thirteenth special session of the General Assembly, which, one must admit, helped further to sensitize the world community to the grave situation prevailing in Africa. What remains to be done is to implement the measures called for in the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990.

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In addition to the African economic situation, the debt crisis is another example of a problem that cries out for international co-operation and assistance. The rapidly escalating debt burden of Africa and the debt-servicing obligations, for instance, have imposed major debilitating effects on the African economies. In all respects, Africa's debt burden, which more than doubled between 1974 and 1984 and accounts for almost half its gross domestic product, is heavier and more onerous than that of other debtor regions. Unless bold and imaginative measures are also taken in this regard, the economies of both the debtor and creditor countries will be gravely affected.

At the global level, too, the need for international co-operation for development can hardly be over-emphasized. Much as stagnation in the industrialized countries negatively affects development in the South, growth in the developing world will definitely have a positive impact on employment and the export trade in the North. So development assistance, in short, should be viewed as mutually beneficial to both the donor and the recipient countries. Unfortunately, the current international economic system, characterized as it is by inequity and injustice, cannot possibly afford us the opportunities for development. It is little wonder, therefore, that we should still persevere in our efforts to establish the new international economic order and, to that end, to call for renewed efforts to reactivate the process of global negotiations.

Developed countries must recognize that problems of development are the problems not of the poor alone, but of the rich as well. As failure to realize that fact would be disastrous to all, co-operation between North and South must be revitalized and the major imbalances in the world economy, including the related issues of money, finance, trade and development, must be immediately attended to.

(Mr. Wolde, Ethiopia)

Finally, let me stress once again that the current international situation leaves much to be desired. Not only is peace threatened, but avenues for development are increasingly blocked. The very future of the United Nations itself is by no means certain. To save the United Nations - indeed, the world - from impending danger, we have to come up with new initiatives to solve old problems and with novel approaches to cope with new challenges. While we must all be realistic in facing up to the present challenges of peace and development, our realism should not be based on expediency, opportunism or despair; ours must be a realism motivated by ideals. Ethiopia takes this opportunity to reaffirm once again its readiness to make the necessary contribution to the noble quest for peace, progress and justice, and, as a victim of the breakdown of international morality and legality in the 1930s, reiterates its unshakeable faith, confidence and trust in our United Nations.

Mr. SCEBERRAS TRIGONA (Malta): On behalf of the delegation of Malta, and on my own behalf, I congratulate the President on his well-deserved election to preside over the General Assembly at its forty-first session. I also extend our heartfelt appreciation to Mr. Jaime de Piniés for the excellent manner in which he guided the Assembly's work at its fortieth session.

The system of international relations slowly developed after the Second World War is under increasing strain. The ideal is that of a community of nations reconciling individual and collective interests through a peaceful process of consultation and co-operation.

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The reality, however, is the resurgence of arbitrary actions and the use or threat of the use of force as a prime determinant in inter-State relationships. After two dangerous cold wars since the end of the Second World War, a new period of détente is desperately needed.

In the United Nations Charter, regional associations are envisaged as basic components of a multilateral system structured around the United Nations. In practice the first two major post-war regional associations soon developed into two competing military concentrations largely outside the orbit of the United Nations system. Other regional associations and groupings have indeed also emerged which, more directly, translate the fundamental objectives of the Charter into concrete programmes of action at the regional level. Progressively, however, the capacity of the United Nations to mould those various initiatives into a coherent system for global peace and security is being eroded.

The ongoing financial crisis within the United Nations is but a symptom of a much more deep-rooted malaise.

The Mediterranean has long been an arena of events which dramatically illustrate the strains imposed upon the objective of a peaceful multilateral system. Direct confrontation between the two super-Powers is a daily reality in our region. That confrontation has led to a naval-military build-up unique in its scope and potential for trouble. In the Mediterranean the super-Power confrontation is even more direct than it is in Central Europe. There it is at least moderated by the presence and involvement of other members of the two military alliances.

The problems of the major trouble-spots in the Mediterranean region, in particular the Middle East, only compound and exacerbate that confrontation and events in the Central Mediterranean over the last 12 months are a clear

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manifestation of the dangerous volatility which that confrontation brings to the region. It is in this very specific regional context that Malta has adopted its status of neutrality based on the principles of non-alignment. We have responded to a turbulent regional situation in the only manner which permits us to pursue and safeguard our national security and prosperity while at the same time contributing to the security and development of our region as a whole, as well as to a second détente between the two super-Powers. It is in that sense that Malta's neutrality follows the other successful experiments towards neutrality which have been tried in Europe in the post-war years. The various other neutral States of Europe, strikingly different as they are in their various national experiences, still share one fundamental aspect: the adoption of the status of neutrality for them constitutes the means whereby they can play a distinct but constructive role in the destiny of their region. Far from being a withdrawal from the state of super-Power confrontation which surrounds them, their status of neutrality permits them to assert their freedom of action in the face of that confrontation.

For Malta and the other neutral States of Europe, neutrality does not only carry the traditional commitment towards non-involvement in an eventual conflict: it also carries the additional commitment to an active policy in peacetime directed towards eliminating those factors that could bring about such an eventual conflict. The role of the neutral States of Europe in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe is a major example of how that commitment can be translated into collective action.

At the same time, Malta is also a developing country, sharing common aspirations with the other newly emergent nations of the world. Our strict adherence to the principles of non-alignment therefore makes it clear that our neutrality in the context of the super-Power confrontation in the Mediterranean is

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by no means a rejection of our solidarity with the rest of the developing world. Malta is indeed deeply committed to the struggles of the peoples of Palestine and southern Africa to achieve freedom and dignity and to the efforts of the peoples of Cyprus, Afghanistan and Kampuchea to rid their territories of foreign troops; to the endeavours by the people of Korea to reunite their divided country; and to the struggle of the people of Nicaragua to resist foreign interference.

We are equally committed to the struggle for the creation of new international economic and information orders which would open the way for a more just and equitable partnership between all the peoples of the world. We will invariably stand with all those who work for peace and justice in the face of aggression and oppression. Our voice will never fail to join in the call for more stability, fairness and equity in the relations among peoples and nations.

It is just over six years since Malta formally adopted its status of neutrality, based on the principles of non-alignment. The adoption of that status had been preceded by a decade of careful planning and preparation, intended to secure the essential foundation upon which our neutrality could be assured. The Maltese economy was thoroughly restructured, from one geared towards servicing a military base to one dedicated to friendship and co-operation with all States.

In the mid-1970s, while still half-way through its process of economic and political transformation, Malta joined the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. Its membership of that Movement served as a major encouragement and support to our continuing endeavours, and by March 1979 the last vestiges of a foreign military presence in Malta had been eliminated. The way was completely open for the formal adoption of a status of neutrality by the Government, and its proclamation was eventually incorporated in Malta's Neutrality Agreement with Italy, signed in September 1980 and duly registered with the United Nations in conformity with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.

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Malta's status of neutrality reflects the deepest aspirations of the Maltese people for national and regional peace and progress. It is rooted in an increasingly broad-based national consensus. Although originally inspired by the Socialist Government of Malta, which since 1971 has been given three consecutive popular mandates for power by the people of Malta, a parliamentary select committee composed of members of both sides of the House is now considering the proper means of enshrining the status of neutrality in Malta's constitution.

Over the last six years, Malta's status of neutrality, based on the principles of non-alignment, has also received the recognition and support of a growing number of regional and other States as well as of international organizations. First Yugoslavia, then Italy, led the way in 1980. Italy was soon joined by its Mediterranean partners in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) - notably France and Greece - in giving recognition and support to a policy which was manifestly aimed at making a significant contribution towards the objective of ensuring greater security and stability in what is the most exposed southern flank of NATO.

The non-aligned States of the Mediterranean region, in particular the North African States of Libya, Tunisia and Algeria, also followed Yugoslavia in extending recognition and support for Malta's neutrality. In removing the possibility of a military base for outside Powers on its territory a neutral Malta not only joined the growing ranks of the non-aligned members but also eliminated one of the traditional focal points of the aggressive armaments build-up in the region, which had in the past also served as a direct threat to the security of non-aligned countries in the Mediterranean region.

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Two regional organizations which between them incorporate most of the Mediterranean States - the European Economic Community (EEC) and the Arab League - have played a significant role in giving application to the commitment of their Mediterranean members to extend tangible support for Malta's neutrality. The original association agreement between Malta and the EEC of 1970 has over the years been extended and enlarged to permit this support. Two Protocols on financial assistance, major improvements in market access for Maltese exports and provisions for industrial co-operation have already been agreed upon. The European communities are now examining proposals submitted by Malta's Prime Minister Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici in May of this year for closer political co-operation as a basis for a special relationship which could create conditions favourable for Malta to consider eventual membership.

With the Arab League Malta is also engaged in establishing a special relationship aimed at further consolidating the close ties of co-operation Malta already enjoys with all Arab States. Proposals submitted by the Government of Malta to the League's secretary-general earlier this year with this objective in mind should be the object of the League's council's deliberations in the near future.

Outside its immediate region, Malta's status of neutrality has enabled it to establish new friendships and to revitalize traditional partnerships on the basis of mutual benefit and respect. With the States of Eastern Europe, with non-aligned countries, with close countries like Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States, and with China, Malta has in fact opened up rewarding economic, political, commercial, cultural and other relationships which are inspired by, and which in turn serve to further consolidate, Malta's status of neutrality.

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From traditional partners in Western Europe Malta has also now received due recognition of and support for its neutrality. The United Kingdom has signified respect for the status adopted by its former colony by making it known, in particular, that it would avoid taking action which could be seen as a challenge to that status. Last year Malta and Britain reached an agreement on the clearing of wartime bombs and wrecks which were obstructing full exploitation of the economic potential of Malta's deep-water Grand Harbour. British navy personnel co-operated with Maltese divers in the clearing operations, and Britain made an important financial contribution this year towards the costs of that operation.

That in turn opened the way for a revitalization of the long-standing partnership between Malta and Britain. During 1986 we have had a series of intensive and highly successful contacts which have laid the foundation for the establishment of a durable and mature relationship between our two peoples, free now from any residual irritations from the past. Perhaps the most symbolic of this year's events was the impressive welcome which the Maltese gave to a navy frigate when it called at the Grand Harbour to join in the 15 August celebrations, recalling the remarkable experiences shared by our two peoples during the darkest days of the Second World War.

Later in the year Malta was also encouraged to receive a formal announcement by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany of its determination to respect and support our status of neutrality and its recognition that that status was making a significant contribution towards security and co-operation in the Mediterranean.

It is evident that Malta's neutrality has now received recognition from a wide range of countries representing members of both major military alliances, as well as a wide cross-section of members of the Non-Aligned Movement. This recognition

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has also been given by important international organizations, including the Commonwealth, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Non-Aligned Movement itself.

It is important to emphasize in this context that the two super-Powers have also given Malta their own assurances regarding their respect and support for its neutrality. For us this is of particular significance in the light of the fact that we define our neutrality essentially in terms of the super-Power confrontation in Europe and in the Mediterranean, and we further consider it one of the major objectives of our neutral status to help limit and even reverse the manifestations of that confrontation in our region.

The Government of Malta has in fact repeatedly made it clear that it seeks the reduction and eventual elimination of all foreign armaments, especially the nuclear armaments of the super-Powers, from the Mediterranean. We aim to use both the moral force arising from our neutral status and the close co-operation for peace which it permits us to establish with the neutral States of Europe and the non-aligned Mediterranean States to create the conditions which would make possible a gradual and evenly scaled withdrawal of the navies of both super-Powers from our region. Central to our approach in this context is the objective of giving a greater role in regional matters to the States of the region themselves. We are determined to work with those States to ensure respect for the principle of non-resort to force in all the problems which arise in the region.

Developments in the Mediterranean over the last 12 months have put our endeavours in this direction to a severe test.

By the middle of April of this year a spiral of violence and counter-violence had resulted in the bombings of civilian and military targets in Tripoli and Benghazi by the United States. Even in an international environment in which many of the accepted norms of inter-State behaviour remain disregarded, those developments were considered as most unusual and disconcerting.

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An armed attack by one State against another State in the absence of a declaration of war in itself constitutes an unwelcome action fraught with dangerous implications for international peace and security. In the case of the April attack on Libya the danger was immeasurably compounded by the fact that the attacking State was one of the two super-Powers. The risk of retaliation by the other super-Power was real and immediate. Furthermore no Mediterranean State could remain undisturbed that armaments brought into the region in the context of bloc confrontation were suddenly being used in an attack against a non-aligned State of the region.

An examination of the events which preceded the April bombings reveals not so much a sequence of cause and effect as an erratic and ever widening spiral of violence. Terrorist activities, never absent from our region, had intensified since the previous summer. One recalls the TWA hijacking of June 1985, a grenade attack in Rome in September, the hijacking and landing in Malta of the Egypt Airlines Boeing in November, the attacks at the Rome and Vienna airports in December, and the TWA bombings and the attacks on a Berlin night-club in early April 1986.

At the beginning of October 1985 Israeli planes attacked the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Tunis. This action was followed about ten days later by the forced interception by United States fighters of an Egyptian airline carrying suspected Palestian hijackers. This incident led to friction between two NATO allies, the United States and Italy, and even to a crisis in the Italian Government coalition.

By January there were visible signs of increasing tension between the United States and Libya. United States warships were increasingly deployed in the vicinity of Libya, and the United States President announced severe economic sanctions against Libya and invited his allies to do likewise.

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In February Israeli aircraft forced a Libyan Arab Airlines aircraft to land in Israel. In March, during naval manoeuvres held by the United States Navy in the Gulf of Sidra, there were armed encounters between United States aircraft and Libyan patrol boats and missile sites.

The bombings of Tripoli and Benghazi on 15 April were themselves effected by fighter units operating from aircraft carriers cruising off the Libyan coast, in addition to other bombers taking off from bases in Britain. Following the bombing on 15 April two Libyan missiles were fired against the Italian island of Lampedusa, which is only about 100 miles to the south-west of Malta.

Behind these events is the untold tragedy of innocent individuals killed or wounded in this erratic violence. They are the immediate and most dramatic victims of a situation which has escaped the constraints of even minimum respect for the norms of international behaviour. In a broader perspective, however, the whole international community has fallen victim to these events since they directly threaten the fragile fabric of a rule of law without which regional and global peace and security cannot be preserved.

What has happened in the Mediterranean over the past few months reflects a sense of despair on the part of those directly concerned that peaceful means do not exist through which they can pursue what they consider their fundamental interests. They have therefore arrogated to themselves arbitrary actions and codes of behaviour without any consideration of the wider implications of their activities. This is as true of the random acts of individual terrorists as it is of the ostensibly more carefully deliberated acts of States. A vicious circle has, therefore, been created whereby the ineffectiveness of a multilateral system in redressing fundamental grievances breeds actions and counter-actions which further erode the basis upon which that multilateral system can exist.

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When confronted with this increasingly tense situation, one option which neutral Malta could not conceivably consider was to stand by passively without taking any action. On the contrary, and in spite of the fact that there were those that acted otherwise, we exerted strenuous efforts to try to persuade all the States directly concerned to adopt measures for the peaceful settlement of disputes as envisaged in the United Nations Charter and avoid all temptations to use or threaten to use force. In the circumstances we conducted our efforts on two levels.

At the first level, at which action was most urgent, Malta took an immediate and unequivocal stand in its attitude towards acts of terrorism as well as towards the means which should be adopted in resolving differences among the States involved. Our message to the terrorists was clear and firm. Not only did we condemn their actions, but we took all possible measures from our side to block these actions. We were equally clear and firm in our message to the contending States. Dialogue, not the use or threat of use of force, was the means for resolving difference. In order to bring about a dialogue among those directly concerned, Malta's Prime Minister, Karmenu Misfud Bonnici, personally travelled to Libya and Italy, held extensive consultations in Malta and kept all parties fully informed of all his initiatives throughout the months from January to April. It is a stark reminder of the extent of our efforts, as well as of the lack of response by some parties, that Libya's Prime Minister was in Malta consulting with Prime Minister Misfud Bonnici, former Prime Minister Mintoff and myself on ways and means of organizing the dialogue only eight hours before Tripoli and Benghazi were attacked.

At the second level, from the earliest days of January Malta sought to bring into application whatever processes and procedures were available at both the international and the regional level to intercede in this dangerous spiral of tension. Foremost among these was the peace-keeping activities of the United

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Nations Secretary-General and of the Security Council. Twice in the space of two months, first in March and then in April, Malta requested the convening of the Security Council to consider the dangerous situation in the central Mediterranean. In the Council we earnestly urged that the power of reason and goodwill be permitted to prevail, that recourse be made exclusively to the measures for the peaceful settlement of disputes envisaged under the Charter and that the United Nations Secretary-General be entrusted with using his good offices in the situation.

At the same time we also explored the possibility of bringing about collective action at the regional level. In this spirit Malta's Prime Minister twice invited his Mediterranean colleagues, first in January and then again in April, to meet in order to discuss and make the corresponding undertakings deriving from the related issues of non-use of force, non-use of bases and disallowance of terrorist training in or action from the territories of what were to be contracting parties to a Mediterranean compact for peace.

Unfortunately, none of these initiatives bore fruit, and the spiral of violence reached the stage of an armed attack by one State against another. Events in recent weeks have made it clear that the April bombings were not at all the remedy they were purported to be but just another escalation in the spiral of violence and tension.

One compensating element in the events of April was the fact that no Mediterranean State, whether aligned or not, permitted the use of its territory for the planned act of aggression against another Mediterranean State. It is such a stirring, however isolated, of what appears to be a regional consciousness that confirms our commitment to continue working for the eventual transformation of the Mediterranean into a zone of peace, friendship and co-operation. Neutral Malta is determined, if a similar situation should again arise, once again to take peace

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initiatives analogous to the ones it pursued earlier this year. Malta also finds ample scope for wide-ranging initiatives, inspired by its status of neutrality and non-alignment, in the various international forums in which it actively participates.

The United Nations forum, harassed as it is by difficulties of an administrative as well as a political nature, remains the corner-stone of all initiatives aimed at the establishment of a more structured and regulated multilateral system. Much is often made of the voting patterns which emerge in the course of decision-making at the United Nations. Malta's own votes are invariably governed by its chosen status of neutrality based on the principles of non-alignment. This was the case during our tenure of the Security Council seat in 1983-1984, as it is still during the annual sessions of the United Nations General Assembly.

Regarding concrete initiatives, we are conscious of the fate that befalls such far-reaching concepts as the one we helped to launch almost 20 years ago concerning the definition of the high seas as the common heritage of mankind. This was adopted unanimously in the late 1960s, debated extensively during the 1970s and translated into a comprehensive convention in the early 1980s. Today the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea languishes awaiting signature by a few of the most important United Nations Members that laboured so publicly for its elaboration. We shall persist in our endeavours to ensure universal adherence to the basic United Nations Convention.

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In the light of such frustrating experiences, we have more recently sought to tailor our initiatives more closely to the prevailing realities. This has not prevented us from launching useful initiatives. During this very session of the General Assembly, for example, we shall be seeking to bring to fruition an idea we have long pursued, namely, the creation of an institute for aging, which we should be prepared to host in Malta in the framework of the Foundation for International Studies, which we have recently created.

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Another initiative which we have actively pursued during General Assembly sessions is the resolve to define the Mediterranean as a zone of peace and co-operation. We have piloted a number of consensus resolutions on this subject in recent years. It is our hope that this year our draft will mark a significant step forward towards our objective. We also find it most useful to pursue functional projects within the framework of the competent organs of the United Nations system. Such functional projects once properly refined can make a significant contribution to the overall objective of regional co-operation and security in the Mediterranean region.

It is in this context that we have proposed to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) the launching of a regional project intended to elaborate a development plan for the whole Mediterranean area. Within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) we are pursuing the initiative of bringing together the representatives of the three major religions in the Mediterranean region, with the aim of creating the opportunity and tolerance in an area which has unfortunately been the traditional source of deep-rooted divisions and prejudices in our region.

Within the framework of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) we continue to participate actively in the action plan for the protection of the Mediterranean environment, a project which not only has been of marked benefit to our region but also served as a model for similar initiatives elsewhere.

The Commonwealth is another forum which has provided Malta with many opportunities for giving concrete application to its dedication to neutrality and non-alignment. Because of the Commonwealth's own previous connection with South Africa, it takes an especially active role in seeking to eliminate the evils of racial oppression and acts of aggression practised by the white minority régime in South Africa.

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Commonwealth actions in this context cover the whole range of possible options. The call for a severe limitation, and where possible total elimination, of all contacts with South Africa, in the commercial, industrial, financial, cultural, sport and other sectors is very clear at the Commonwealth level. At the same time the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation organizes various projects of assistance for student from Namibia and South Africa. These permit even countries with extremely limited national resources like Malta to play a part in these constructive efforts. Indeed many students from Rhodesia in the 1970's, Namibia in the early 1980's, and soon from South Africa itself will have benefited through this scheme from the various training facilities available in Malta. In this way we are also playing a role in the efforts towards bringing about the much needed radical changes in southern Africa, preferably with a minimum of violence and bloodshed.

Through the Non-Aligned Movement Malta has been able to join in many far-reaching initiatives aimed at instituting the process of regional consultations in the Mediterranean. Under a mandate from the Seventh Summit the 11 Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Mediterranean members met in Valletta in September 1984 in a historic first meeting on co-operation for peace and security in the Mediterranean. This first meeting laid the foundations for regular co-operation not only among the Non-Aligned Mediterranean members themselves but also between them and the other States in the region. The Eighth Summit in Harare this September agreed on a mandate for further meetings of Non-Aligned Mediterranean Members. Preparations for the second meeting which is to be held in Yugoslavia in the very near future are actively under way.

Malta's initiatives on the Mediterranean, in the context of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) complement its initiatives within the Non-Aligned Movement. The CSCE forum creates a unique opportunity for

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collective action by the neutral and Non-Aligned States of the region in the pursuit of Euro-Mediterranean security and co-operation.

The Helsinki Final Act established the principle that there is no security in Europe without security in the Mediterranean. In the Belgrade follow-up meeting of the CSCE Malta launched the initiative for a meeting on Mediterranean co-operation which was held in Valletta in 1979, and to which other Mediterranean States were invited. This was followed in 1984 by a second meeting in Venice. In the Madrid follow-up meeting of the CSCE Malta sought to launch a parallel process of Euro-Mediterranean consultations on security questions. Though this proposal did not receive open support at the time, we are now encouraged to note that General Secretary Gorbachev has recently openly expounded a similar idea. It is our hope that this can now be taken up in the next CSCE follow-up meeting due to start in Vienna next month.

The Vienna meeting will also have before it the results of the first phase of the Conference on disarmament in Europe. The recently concluded Stockholm conference reached significant agreement on measures for confidence and security building in Europe as a prelude to more substantive discussions on disarmament proper due in a subsequent stage. It included amphibious and naval activities supportive of ongoing land activities in the new confidence and security building régime. Naval activities in the Mediterranean, as elsewhere in Europe, are therefore now included in a scheme aimed at reducing the risks of conflict throughout Europe. Malta will seek to ensure that this significant breakthrough will be consolidated in the mandate for the second phase of the Conference to be elaborated in Vienna. We remain convinced, and recent events have amply confirmed, that all naval activities in the Mediterranean have a direct bearing on all security considerations in the whole Euro-Mediterranean region.

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Another multilateral forum which provides Malta with an opportunity to pursue policies inspired by its neutral and Non-Aligned status is the Council of Europe. Here again the opportunity for co-ordination with the other neutral States of Europe is extremely valuable.

Malta wishes to utilize the Council of Europe forum to resist the concept of Europe as a perpetually divided continent. In this framework Malta co-operates with the other neutral members of the Council of Europe to create as many opportunities as possible for non-member European States to participate in the Council's activities.

At the same time Malta also believes in the need for Council of Europe members to extend an arm of co-operation towards their Arab neighbours in the Mediterranean. Recent events in the Mediterranean, with the focus they have thrown on international terrorism, have created a subject of particular interest and concern both to Europeans and Arabs. This could usefully become the subject of consultations between them. For this purpose Malta has proposed the creation of a small contact group for representatives of the Council of Europe membership to meet representatives of the Arab League membership and discuss the subject in all its aspects. The Secretary-General of the Arab League has signified to us the interest of his membership in this proposal. Malta has already raised the proposal in the appropriate organs of the Council of Europe, and intends to pursue it further, especially during the forthcoming ministerial conference on terrorism.

All peoples and nations of the world have a common understanding of what they mean and intend when they express their deep aspirations for peace and security. It is a fact of life, however, that the means preferred in the pursuit of these common aspirations very often differ radically from one another. Malta is convinced that peace can only be obtained through peaceful means, and that the

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tools of war invariably lead to bitterness and conflict. We believe that the multilateral system of international relations, based upon respect for the rule of law, and mutual respect among States, is an indispensable aspect of any successful approach towards disarmament, security and co-operation. Malta's dedication to peace and progress, through neutrality and non-alignment, is for us the essential manifestation of these fundamental convictions.

The meeting rose at 12 noon