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Forty-first session

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Tuesday, 7 October 1986, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. THOMPSON (Fiji)  
(Vice-President)

later: Mr. CHOUDHURY (Bangladesh)  
(President)

- General debate [9] (continued)

Statements were made by:

Mr. Acevedo Peralta (El Salvador)  
Mr. Gurinovich (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic)  
Mr. Basendwah (Yemen)  
Mr. Al-Mahdi (Sudan)

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Thompson (Fiji), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 9 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE

Mr. ACEVEDO PERALTA (El Salvador) (interpretation from Spanish): I wish to convey to the President my warmest congratulations on having undertaken the highest office of the forty-first regular session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and we wish the President every success in this endeavour. We are convinced that under his wise guidance the General Assembly will be able to find formulas of understanding which will undoubtedly contribute to a solution of the international problems we will be discussing here.

Similarly, let me convey a special word of gratitude for the praiseworthy and arduous work of the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, whose dedication to the cause of peace and international co-operation deserves the firm and unreserved support of all the Member States of the Organization.

Today I bring to the Assembly a message from a heroic people who have learned, among many other things, how to listen to others, but who today call on those others in an appeal for understanding of their own problems.

This is the odyssey of a people, of a Government and its leader, and of an army which at a given point in its history decided, with epic courage, to put behind it the dark night of dictatorship and oppression.

El Salvador would like to tell its story once again and ask the world for its understanding, an understanding which could provide the strong encouragement, which it needs to press on with determination along the stony path towards full democracy

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

and well-being of the community. Blood, tears and sorrow have been the path we were fated to travel in order to win our final freedom through pluralism and social justice. And the higher the price that has to be paid, the more determined must be our effort, and the more firmly entrenched the result of that effort.

El Salvador, after six years of democratic revolution, is now irresistably breaking through the barriers of misunderstanding and moving with a sure step towards the consolidation of the essential bases of a society with greater justice, equality, solidarity and participation.

This process, which an incomprehensible fate has decreed must be so painful, requires us to make an anguished appeal for the full understanding of this august Assembly, which I am sure will never deny its recognition to the peoples who are prepared to sacrifice their lives for peace.

El Salvador has changed. Even when Jose Napoleon Duarte first took over as President, we were aware of the great efforts and sacrifices that would be needed to develop a democracy in the particular conditions prevailing in El Salvador. Because of this, we set up a political framework that reflected the expectations of our people, so long frustrated.

We were always aware of the tremendous difficulties involved in this project, because the strategy had to be pursued within an existing framework of radical social conflict that polarized the various forces and groups, because of the conditions of injustice and socio-economic marginalization involved in the structural crisis. Therefore, we drew up the general plan of government which was in fact a doctrinaire and pragmatic response to the problems of El Salvador, based on five main objectives that served as the starting point in securing the national

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

unity we needed to overcome the crisis. These goals are: humanization, pacification, democratization, participation and the recovery of the national economy. As far as democratization is concerned, the Government has in fact become the catalyst and generator of change by developing institutions that promote the stability and cohesion of our society. In that they represent new channels for the expression of the ideas, aspirations and demands of the different social groups. But democracy thus described is a cold concept, devoid of value, because any government could say that it is committed to undertaking a process of this nature and scope, without being able to list any specific achievements.

Our case is different. We have opened up, without any reservation, without any false pretexts, the very heart of our country to hundreds of international observers during the four sets of elections which took place in 1982, 1984 and 1985 with respect to these events. Those observers have in fact given unimpeachable testimony as to the legitimacy and integrity of those elections.

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta,  
El Salvador)

A few days ago we realized one of the greatest hopes of our people: the establishment of a reliable, autonomous and definitive electoral process which will, in fact, ensure the democratic ideal. Our people can therefore be sure of being able in future to express their will freely at the polls and we are convinced that democracy will thus be strengthened as the electoral process is improved.

As history has shown us repeatedly and dramatically, democracy must achieve its truest meaning, going beyond the political and embracing all the various aspects of national life. One cannot, for example, ignore the fact that without justice, without a new law in keeping with new circumstances, democracy cannot be achieved. For this reason we are carrying out a thorough judicial reform for which special committees based on the will of the majority are working hard on draft reforms of the national codes. One of these, the labour code, is now almost ready for promulgation. Responding to the present-day demands for justice and participation, it ascribes a proportional distribution of profits between employers and workers, thus creating a climate of equity and understanding.

Similarly, no effort would meet with support if it did not provide a material basis for the well-being of Salvadorian society: that is, the land and those who work it. Today, our farmers - those anonymous ones who shape our real hopes - can, by virtue of this labour code, form trade unions freely and enjoy their collective rights to the full. Indeed, the farmers trade union movement has always been essential for our historical design. A new democracy would have no meaning unless it drew on our past, and on the genesis of our conflict, that is, the obsolete former land régime, the eternal cause of misunderstanding and injustice in the underdeveloped societies.

With legitimate pride I can say to the international community that we have been able to satisfy the expectations of our people and of history because the

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta,  
El Salvador)

agrarian reform which was undertaken only six years ago, and which was one of the most deep-rooted in the history of America, has achieved its main objective. In the first two phases 40 per cent of the best land has been passed over to co-operatives and small landowners. This means that now more than 700,000 Salvadorians are enjoying a real redistribution of the agrarian wealth, with a complete restructuring of the tenancy system.

But in order for this redistribution to be more effective and fair, based on a criterion of true participation, a co-operative solidarity fund has been established to ensure that all of the sector that has been reformed may participate, with the net gains, in the financing of any co-operatives that are not financially viable or may undertake special projects.

It is impossible to imagine that a reform as comprehensive and innovative as this, in a system of imperfect structures, would not have great problems and inadequacies, but we are convinced that with the patience of our people, with the determination of our Government, and with the technical and economic co-operation of the international community, this noble and just project, which represents a key element in our new democratic revolution, will operate better day by day and will achieve its high goal. It is important to state that this support and assistance are particularly necessary because, in accordance with our Constitution, the third and last phase of this reform will be implemented next January. Under it, no individual can hold more than 250 hectares.

El Salvador has changed. In El Salvador the democratization of credit has enabled thousands of workers in the city to gain free access to line of credit on the land. It is now possible to ensure that credit is not simply held in the hands of a few banking systems. We have thus been able to strengthen the new agrarian system by redistribution of credit.

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta,  
El Salvador)

In the midst of a serious financial crisis, the result of this costly conflict, we are now valiently undertaking economic reform. This involves the modernization of the static structures of our economy, making them more dynamic and in keeping with the new situation, in which the State plays an appropriate role with regard to the economic situation to protect the majority and to ensure the welfare of all the people of El Salvador.

In this democratic concept of participation there must be very firm control of basic commodity prices, the maintenance of low-interest rates and credits for low-income housing, with a complementary law for the renting of housing. These are all different aspects which have been ensured at present. To this we must add that three successive salary increases have been given to public workers and thousands of small- and medium-term projects have been undertaken in the semi-urban areas, for the poorer sectors, the farmers and workers. The national plan for recovery in the economic and social sphere, uniting all of the Salvadorian peoples in a patriotic effort, will keep us united in the work of reconstruction. The magnitude of this effort on the part of the Government must be recognized, account being taken of the serious financial difficulties posed by its present structure.

These reforms, together with the administrative and cultural reforms, are proof of the fact that El Salvador is fighting to consolidate a specific pattern of democratic revolution, as opposed to totalitarian Marxism and liberal individualism, which do not meet the demands of a community and a free society.

In this same spirit of participation, in the economic sphere, we are also setting up a tax reform to ensure a better distribution of the tax burden on the stronger economic sectors. This has been achieved through indirect elimination of taxation and on the other hand by levying a tax on net capital and superfluous and luxury goods. This will ensure a fairer system in which all Salvadorians will

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta,  
El Salvador)

share, in accordance with their means, the costs of the present conflict. We are thus, little by little, creating a climate conducive to ensuring that the private business sector may contribute to the economic recovery.

It is true that employers do play a very important role in the economic and social sphere. It is also true that all Salvadorians must contribute in making the sacrifices and efforts that are essential for social justice and to overcome this inhuman conflict in which we are involved.

In this respect, we make an appeal to the private sector of El Salvador for them to set aside their doubts, reticence and prejudices and to heed the call of their country, to follow the course of development, knowing that their efforts will redound to the benefit of democracy.

El Salvador has changed. It is, therefore, a matter of great sorrow to us that this revolution towards freedom, which we are experiencing daily with blood and pain, should be misunderstood and often criticized by certain Governments, like those of Cuba and Nicaragua. They have set themselves up as gratuitous detractors of our actions. They do not consider the fact that for decades the former has been keeping its people under the iron yoke of a one-party total and cruel dictatorship, while the other, unfortunately, is following the same path.

It is sometimes difficult to understand how impossible it is for the international system to act with a greater sense of justice for all since no one can fail to see that these Governments have made themselves creditable by having a "special reporter" on human rights, whereas these human rights are being blatantly and permanently violated.

El Salvador has changed. We believe that we must have a system based on the will of the majority, a system that inspires and encourages true freedom for the

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta,  
El Salvador)

human person, for without it there cannot be democracy. It is thus that my Government is determined to promote democracy, with full and unrestricted freedom of expression, a freedom lived and exercised daily by all the institutions in my country that enjoy this inalienable right.

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

The Government of El Salvador, presided over by Mr. Jose Napoleon Duarte, is promoting respect for and fulfilment of human rights. It is in this sensitive area that my country has made the greatest progress. It is important also to highlight the progress made in the military sector. Tremendous efforts have been made to make our army more technical and more professional. We now have an armed force which plays an important role in ensuring harmony and understanding among the people of El Salvador. It is important also to mention the specific efforts made in this area which have made it possible to punish all forms of abuse of authority or any other type of indiscriminate violence. Six hundred and thirty seven arrests have been made of members of the armed forces brought to trial for various offences committed against the people.

On the other hand, in the case of political assassinations, figures are clearly falling, if one bears in mind that in 1986 this represented only 2 per cent compared to the figures for 1980. Those figures cannot in the main be attributed either directly or presumably to any elements in the armed forces.

On the contrary, the people of El Salvador have seen with sorrow and astonishment terrorist acts carried out by elements of the Revolutionary Democratic Front-Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation, which sometimes included the destruction of telephone exchanges, machine-gun attacks on public transport, the burning of coffee stocks, the massive destruction of power pylons and, above all, the inhuman placing of mines designed to mutilate their victims' lower limbs, particularly among humble peasants working the land, who unfortunately are those most often hit by this form of violence, which has also often killed their children.

This shows the degree of despair of the guerilla network and also explains the many desertions from the ranks of the guerilla movement and its loss of all popular and international support, and explains why it is heading for a historic defeat.

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

We hope that the Special Rapporteur, in his next report on human rights, will reflect the tremendous increase in the number of desertions from the guerilla movement, the deserters having joined the democratic process. Together with the numbers captured, they are received and well treated in all phases of rehabilitation, which clearly shows that these groups are rapidly crumbling; they are assured at all times of full respect for their fundamental rights by the armed forces.

However, we do not ignore the fact that there are mistakes and problems but we have shown that we are determined to overcome them and to ensure that this conflict which has been imposed upon our people will be fully humanized.

El Salvador has changed. My Government views with concern the attitude adopted with regard to the situation in respect of human rights in El Salvador, particularly by certain international governmental or non-governmental bodies, which are induced by certain Governments or groups which seem constantly to challenge the legitimacy of our democratic institutions, thus favouring the strategic policy of the rebel groups in my country. My country has spared no effort to achieve peace and justice and therefore it would welcome more equitable treatment by this body with regard to the progress achieved in my country with regard to human rights and fundamental liberties. We therefore hope that a more understanding attitude will be adopted, in keeping with the efforts we are undertaking at present. I would even say, with all due respect, that my country has considered that in view of the sincere measures adopted in this area the continuing presence of the Special Rapporteur is in fact a heavy burden for our country and it would be fairer if his mandate were not renewed.

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

El Salvador has changed. We believe that there can be no peace without democracy and no social justice without peace. The peace-making process must provide the necessary room for political freedom in which all sectors may participate in the business of the State and society without recourse to violence so as to allow differences to be overcome in the context of a frank democratic dialogue. My Government believes that peace does not simply mean reaching an agreement to settle a dispute. Peace is not simply the absence of armed conflict. It has a deeper meaning. Peace means a guarantee of security for man fully to achieve his dignity and enjoy eternal values. Peace means respect for and recognition of the rights of others as an essential requisite in order to unite our efforts to overcome problems and challenges in a constructive way.

In this Assembly the President of the Republic, Mr. Jose Napoleon Duarte, two years ago offered the rebels a peace proposal based on a frank and rational dialogue which would ensure the stability of the democratic process by including those groups into the social process within the framework of our Constitution, which clearly provides for democracy and political pluralism on the broadest basis. That initiative, which was set out in a frankly democratic way, was clearly demonstrated in the two rounds of talks, held in La Palma and Ayagualo in October and November 1984. However, those meetings opened our eyes to the fact that for the rebel groups constitutional dialogue was a tactic made use of for purely propagandistic purposes aimed at frustrating the expectations of peace and democracy of the people of El Salvador. They merely pretended to seek a political solution to the conflict.

During his official visit in May this year to the Contadora Support Group countries, namely Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Uruguay, he offered amnesty and safety to the rebels in exchange for a clear-cut public demonstration of their willingness to renounce violence and war as a means of achieving power. Despite

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

the rigid attitude of the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation-Revolutionary Democratic Front, my Government has supported and will continue to support the process of dialogue, because it forms part of the basic concept of order, society and life from which we draw inspiration as a democratic Christian nation. Not only has this been nationally and internationally accepted as a viable process but, furthermore, a great number of members of the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation-Revolutionary Democratic Front have of their own free will reincorporated themselves into a society thus showing that they reject violence and have adopted the principles and values of western democracy.

In his presidential message to the nation on 1 June this year, President Duarte proposed a third round of talks which would show this unshakable political will on the part of the Government to find a democratic solution to the conflict on the basis of that frank understanding and sense of responsibility which has characterized our President. He has thus fulfilled the commitment he made in this Assembly Hall. However, those who took up arms have in fact adopted an intransigent position by demanding the withdrawal of the army to an area of three hundred square kilometres. They wanted to give the impression that the zone was under their control, which would enable them, at the international level, to demand recognition, but this was, of course, totally illusory. Seeing their pretensions frustrated, they simply cancelled the meeting in spite of the guarantees and safeguards which the Government had offered them, as on previous occasions.

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

This showed the historical illegitimacy of the Revolutionary Democratic Front - Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation - and once again demonstrated the undeniable legitimacy of the Government of El Salvador, which has brought about an unprecedented increase in its ability internationally to act both passively and actively, precisely because of the support of its people and the firm, sincere, modest and honest way in which President Duarte has set out the terms and aims of his political programme, the Government's programme and the national thesis of dialogue.

My Government remains firmly determined to exhaust every possibility of dialogue as the only way to ensure peace on our national soil. That position which is the result of the national consensus, can count on the full support of obedient, unquestioning armed forces, as was clearly recognized in the message to the nation of the Military High Command on 19 September.

As a member of the international community, El Salvador has to deal with a heterogeneous structure characterized by the existence of opposition and dissent in an atmosphere of ideological, political, economic and social confrontation in which the variables of the correlation of forces and world domination become the factors that determine international relations.

This is because the principles of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, the equality of sovereignty of those States, renunciation of the use or threat of force and co-operation in the development of all peoples constitute today more than ever before the fundamental principles of El Salvador's foreign policy, which is rooted in good faith and respect for and compliance with treaties.

But unless complemented by the promotion and defence of democracy, respect for human rights and identification of the specific elements of our internal policy, those principles would be of no value at all to El Salvador's present and future

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

generations. It is only logical therefore that El Salvador's foreign policy should reflect the principles, purposes, and requirements of our internal policy.

This enables us to define and establish our strategy on the basis of three fundamental aspects: legitimacy, by virtue of the origin of the Government and the processes it has developed to defend and consolidate it; neutrality, because we do not intervene in the affairs of other sovereign States and we respect the self-determination of peoples; and democracy, because we associate ourselves with and support, in full solidarity authentic democracies that are free, pluralistic, participatory and based on Western Christian concepts.

Within that very clear-cut framework the aims and means indispensable for achieving peace stand out clearly and are seen in their true dimensions both regionally and internationally, and are implicit in our foreign policy.

Thus our profound democratic, pacifist vocation and the zeal we have always shown to ensure respect for and promote the fundamental rights and freedoms of all peoples determines our vigorous condemnation of the South African régime for its continuing inhuman, segregationist practice of apartheid and its evil efforts to extend it to other, neighbouring States.

We recommend and demand that honest and sincere dialogue and negotiations must be initiated and pursued exhaustively as the best way of finding solutions to the problems of the Middle East, Lebanon and Korea. In this regard my Government recognizes that the formula suggested by South Korea for the reunification of Korea contains positive and useful bases for the gradual achievement of that goal.

As for the regional aspects of our foreign policy, my Government considers that although it is true that the Central American crisis stems from a system of obsolete structures that no longer meet the people's need and expectation of political participation and development, the cold climate of East-West confrontation has also had an impact on its development.

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

No one can doubt that the lack of appropriate mechanisms for the solution of regional problems has also contributed to the establishment of a situation of increasing failure to respect the principles and norms of international law.

We therefore believe that there is a political, diplomatic, security and legal vacuum in Central America, and that it must be filled in order to ensure the adoption of measures and procedures capable of preventing internal and external destabilizing action against our democracies.

Accordingly, the Government of El Salvador has maintained a position of total and determined support for the work of the Contadora Group, since we believe that that is the best possible way to fill the vacuum, and strengthen the principles that can lead to comprehensive, simultaneous, regional, multilateral and verifiable agreements that will undoubtedly bring about the re-establishment of peace, security, democracy and continuing development.

From the beginning of the Contadora initiative my Government made clear its firm political desire for a peaceful solution to the regional crisis and to subscribe to its willingness to the Contadora Act. My Government has declared internationally that the Act is a unique, definitive, irreplaceable and guaranteed document. It is unique because it alone can ensure peace, pluralist democracy, security and economic and social development. It is definitive because it results from an overall Latin American effort within a process of serious negotiation and was approved by consensus. It is irreplaceable because it is historically legitimate and its mechanisms are practical and sure. And it is guaranteed because of its credibility and the universal support it enjoys.

However, the final version of the Contadora Act on Peace and Co-operation in Central America, which was presented to our Government on 7 June last, does not cover the conditions or requirements agreed upon for its adoption and ratification in accordance with the commitment entered into by the five countries by virtue of

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

the Document of Objectives of September 1983, which stated, inter alia:

"To stop the arms race in all its forms and begin negotiations for the control and reduction of current stocks of weapons and on the number of armed troops." (S/16041, p. 5)

We must not forget that in view of the seriousness of the Central American situation, all agreements and commitments entered into must be fulfilled, particularly those governing political aspects, because that is the fundamental condition of the success of the Contadora initiative. I must also reiterate the need to guarantee the efficiency of the mechanisms of implementation and follow-up concerning verification and control of the political commitments in the Document of Objectives.

Finally, faithful to its democratic, peace-loving vocation, El Salvador appeals to the Contadora Group to redouble its efforts to persuade Nicaragua to abide by the consensus formula and the understanding to be adopted in the region. It will not be possible to continue this action if Nicaragua fails to demonstrate the clear political will and readiness to enter into, respect and comply with the commitments assumed under the Contadora Act.

For our part, we have given the clearest proof of good faith and our undeniable wish for the internationalization of the dialogue and democracy in the region, as an alternative to the internationalization of the conflict. El Salvador has presented to the international community the "Contadora Doctrine", which sets out the noble aspiration of the Central American countries to keep the dark spectre of dictatorship out of the region for ever. Thus we clearly show the legitimate and independent nature of El Salvador's foreign policy and our enduring faith in multilateral dialogue.

El Salvador has changed. Therefore, with all the confidence that my Government commands, I call upon Nicaragua to change its incongruous attitude,

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

which will disrupt the regional dialogue and negotiations initiated by Contadora and Esquipulas by actions designed to resolve the regional conflict bilaterally, but which could never lead to a negotiated, simultaneous, multilateral, verifiable solution such as has been proposed by the Contadora Group.

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

Similarly, I must urge the Nicaraguan Government to show a clear indication of good will at the regional level, ceasing to provide, in flagrant violation of international law, a permanent sanctuary for those who wish to bring about subversion in El Salvador and internationally.

The deterioration in the subregional situation makes it imperative that the Central American countries create regional institutions, and revitalize existing ones, to complement the work of the Contadora Group and allow us, the people of Central America, to find consensus solutions to our own problems, through a realistic recognition of existing factors tending towards unity or divergence.

In that spirit, El Salvador is contributing actively to the setting up a Central American parliament, conceived of as a deliberating forum where it will be possible to discuss and draw up agreements on the problems facing us, one which could eventually serve as a mechanism to follow up, verify and control any agreement that the Central American countries may enter into.

Nobody can deny that we have given a clear indication of the political will to remove the Central American problem from the East-West confrontation, since El Salvador was the first to ratify the treaty of co-operation between the European Economic Community and the Central American countries, because we believe that improving the interregional dialogue will contribute greatly to removing the extremes of world interests in the area.

As a well-known South American leader has said,

"The success of the blossoming Latin American democracy depends on its capacity to resolve the great economic and social problems of our time."

My Government is aware that the internal structural imbalances of the developing countries are brought about largely by the persistence of unjust international economic relations.

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

In addition to the high cost of servicing the external debt, our countries are increasingly dependent on world centres. That dependence in turn makes a significant contribution to the imbalance in our economies, reflected in a growing socio-political instability, which besides worsening the quality of life of our peoples attacks the foundations of our democratic processes.

Many of our countries have now carried out the greatest economic readjustment possible. That has meant a high cost for us in social terms, because it has lowered productivity levels and created a fiscal imbalance between income and expenditure, making it very difficult to stabilize and revive the economy.

In that situation it is essential to increase North-South co-operation. It must be based on justice and characterized by greater flexibility in the developed economies, which should support the structural changes in our countries, creating conditions of political, economic and social stability, and not the reverse.

In his address to the Assembly a short time ago, the President of Costa Rica said:

"Yesterday, they [the international banks] cared little that their money maintained the rule of despots. Today, they are not concerned with the suffering of those who pay in liberty." (A/41/PV.9, p. 9-10)

My Government urgently appeals to the Governments of the industrialized countries to understand that the worsening of the economic crisis in the poorer countries is contrary to their own interests, because it deprives vast sectors of mankind of the possibility of sovereignty and self-determination, leading them to feel utter desperation and bringing about a gradual split in the credibility of the democratic system as the ideal way of life, endangering its historic justification and, on the contrary, favouring other political systems already rejected by our peoples.

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

Finally, we must not forget that, as His Holiness Pope Paul VI said, development is the new name of peace.

The Government of El Salvador fully shares the concern of the international community over the increase in terrorist acts, which are proliferating in various parts of the world and every day claim more innocent victims.

The destruction of public property and the economic infrastructure, indiscriminate massacres, the taking of hostages and the placing of bombs in public places are characteristic of the behaviour of the terrorist groups that operate in my country. Having recognized the impossibility of gaining a political or military victory, they have had recourse to such acts to show, both internally and to the world at large, an apparent capacity for action, and at the same time to demoralize the public.

My Government repeats its readiness to commit itself completely to join in international measures to fight such a scourge, for no ideological or political cause can make it acceptable, understandable or justifiable that mankind should be threatened by such irrational behaviour adopted by inhuman organizations that daily distance themselves further from civilization.

It would be unfair to the historic perseverance of two brother peoples, which are striving together to attain common goals, if I did not stress today before the international community, as evidence of the peaceful will and vocation of our Governments, the complete fulfilment of the peace treaty between the Republics of El Salvador and Honduras, signed on 30 October 1980 in Lima, by which we agreed to put an end to the differences that had once separated us. On the basis of that treaty we have agreed to submit jointly for consideration by the International Court of Justice our border dispute - relating to land, islands and sea - as an example of our conviction that international differences and tensions must be overcome through adherence to the recognition of the principles of international law.

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

The conversations and negotiations held to bring about that agreement, which was registered at the Organization yesterday, were held in a climate of friendship and mutual understanding, which contributed to a strengthening of the links of co-operation between El Salvador and Honduras.

My country reaffirms its resolve to abide by the decision of the International Court of Justice on the border dispute, because we are convinced that law and justice will prevail in the decision of the highest international judicial body.

Our Governments have also, with the co-operation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the support of the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration, drawn up a programme to create the right conditions and the necessary trust for the repatriation of the Salvadorian refugees in Honduras to take place voluntarily, in a gradual, planned manner, allowing their resettlement in their various places of origin. That is an effort being made on the basis of the highly humanitarian approach that my Government has adopted towards the conflict that we are having to live with.

El Salvador believes that the values of democracy and liberty are threatened by the accelerating arms race from which the world is suffering. It is impossible for the Governments of Central America to shoulder their historic responsibilities for the economic and social development of their peoples if they have to use their scarce resources to acquire large quantities of armaments for purely defensive reasons. Therefore, the Sandinista Government should renounce its concept of national security as involving a people in arms and the export of revolution, and should, on the contrary, accept, as we accept for ourselves, the establishment of limits on its present arsenal, which will make possible a balance between the forces in the region, as we have proposed in the Contadora Group.

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

I wish now to refer to the crisis that is hampering the United Nations in its attempt to achieve the purposes behind its creation and to abide by its principles. My Government does not believe that the crisis is purely financial; it has deeper implications, to do with confidence in the Organization's ability to contribute to resolving the most pressing problems of our time.

(Mr. Acevedo Peralta, El Salvador)

Therefore we are prepared to give our support to any initiatives which would lead to the restructuring of the Organization so as to enable it once again to carry out its functions effectively and once again be deserving of the confidence and trust placed in it by Member States.

We should like to reiterate our appreciation for the work carried out by the Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, and we would certainly give our strong support to his re-election if that is his wish.

There has been a change in El Salvador, and this brings me to make an urgent appeal to the international community, and particularly to all democratic countries of the world, to close ranks in the defence of the pluralistic and participatory democracy that is now being consolidated at the cost of great sacrifices in El Salvador and, through technical and financial co-operation, to protect it from the threat hanging over it owing to the lack of resources essential to ensure the economic, social and cultural well-being to which everyone living in a democracy aspires.

We believe that one should not speak before thinking and that what one promises one should do. President Duarte and his Government are carrying out their promises; our Government knows how to govern. Hence we are sure that, after a long dark night of hatred and rancour, soon the dawn will break and all Salvadorians will proudly join in singing these lines of our national anthem that remind us that "Peace in supreme happiness has always been El Salvador's noble dream; its achievement our constant goal; its preservation our greatest glory."

Mr. GURINOVICH (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) (interpretation from Russian): Many different words have been spoken from this rostrum. However, those which have prevailed are those which have not been devalued through frequent repetition over a long period of time. Their everlasting value is due to the

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

concepts they embody. "Peace", "security", "freedom of peoples", "prosperity" and "a bright future for humanity" - these are the words that fall into this category. They acquire special significance when backed up with specific proposals and practical deeds aimed at translating these ideals into the flesh and blood of today's international relations and at converting them into a foundation on which the generations to come will build their lives.

At present mankind is going through a particularly crucial stage in its history. Now is the time to decide whether it will continue as a history of reason and peaceful creativity or become a history of global catastrophe. Throughout the preceding millennia humanity, even in times of ordeals and wars, kept looking forward with hope to the morrow, expecting it to be brighter, to bring about more joy and a better life. At present mankind is viewing its future with alarm. This profound feeling of alarm is caused by social injustice, destruction and pollution of the environment, diseases, hunger affecting whole nations and, above all, the threat of total nuclear annihilation. Mankind will be confident of its future only when it eliminates that threat through joint efforts.

The removal of the nuclear and space threat and reversal of the arms race would enable humanity to keep its civilization humane in the best sense of the word and to release resources for economic and social progress. There can be no normal life on a nuclear powder-keg.

The urgency of the situation and the sheer magnitude of the challenge require fundamentally new political thinking. The stereotyped dogmas of the past, such as "might is right", "in politics weakness is an admission of guilt", "containment through deterrence" and the like, are hopelessly out of date. Far from promoting the security of the peoples of the world, they place it in direct jeopardy. The

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization presented at this session also stressed the need for

"a fresh beginning in efforts to overcome stalemates on major issues".

(A/41/1, p. 2).

It is imperative to shed the dogma according to which the security of one State is built on impairing the security of another. In this nuclear and space age the only real security is security for all.

The new political thinking must be translated into practical deeds. Guided by the need to ensure progress in nuclear disarmament as well as in other fields, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, has suggested an urgent meeting between the highest leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States of America. That proposal has been accepted by President Reagan. As the Assembly knows, the meeting will take place in Iceland on 11 and 12 October. It must give an overwhelmingly powerful impulse to negotiations and open up the shortest and most direct approach to the path leading to results. We regard improvement in Soviet-United States relations not only in the context of the interests of the Soviet and American peoples but rather in terms of stronger security for all.

It was through the desire to build a reliable road leading to exactly this kind of universal security that the States of the socialist community introduced their joint initiative on "Establishment of a comprehensive system of international security" for consideration at this session of the Assembly.

The Byelorussian SSR, as a co-sponsor of the proposal, is convinced that relations between States must be built on the principles of peaceful coexistence and respect for mutual interests - security interests in the first place - which

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

would be ensured through material, political and legal, as well as moral and psychological, guarantees. They must be based on co-operation both in preserving life on Earth and in solving the entire gamut of global problems on which the quality of life depends.

Experience teaches us that no State can reliably protect itself by military and technical means alone, even if it succeeds in gaining military superiority over the other side, something which is in fact unattainable. In view of the nature of modern weapons, security can be ensured only through political means. The old order of things must give way to a comprehensive system of international security embracing all spheres of inter-State relations - military, political, economic and humanitarian. Such a system not only would be in utmost harmony with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter but would also enhance their efficacy and the effectiveness of the Organization. It would be the only adequate response to the precarious situation in which humanity finds itself today. The United Nations, being universal both in its membership and in the range of issues it deals with, represents a unique international forum organically suitable for achieving that goal. The Byelorussian SSR, as a founding Member of the United Nations, is convinced that the Organization, which last year celebrated its fortieth anniversary, is mature enough and rich enough in experience for that purpose.

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

We are realists and understand that a comprehensive system of international security will not be brought into existence overnight just by the wave of a magic wand. Persistent efforts will be required of all States. What is needed is the political will and foresight, dialogue and the ability and willingness to overcome myopic, short-lived and selfish calculations in order to agree on mutually acceptable compromises for the sake of the common good.

To end the arms race on Earth and prevent it in outer space and to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction - that must be one of the principal basic elements of a comprehensive security system. The well-known German philosopher and humanist of the eighteenth century Johann Gottfried von Herder wrote at a time when arms were yet primitive, if judged by today's terms: "The battle axe can create nothing, but it can cause a great deal of destruction." The truth of those words has a thousand times greater thrust nowadays. The pernicious policy of the arms race has brought us to a point beyond which destruction may be total. Time itself is now running against humanity, because new means of annihilation are being devised which might not be subject to control at all. In these circumstances pronouncements to the effect that anything but an arms buildup can be the cause of mistrust between States are inappropriate. Without going into scholasticism, let us ask those who espouse this postulate: Do arms engender trust?

Resolute practical moves are required to break out of the vicious spirals of the internal spring of the arms race. Real opportunities for that are opened up by the line of action pursued by the Soviet Union and all the States of the socialist community which reject the clichés of confrontation, defy the stereotypes in political thinking and artificial barriers. The USSR, through its practical actions, proves its readiness to seek compromise solutions to all problems that give rise to controversy or suspicion.

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

The Soviet proposals of 15 January 1986 outlining a programme for complete and general nuclear disarmament by the year 2000 are in line with the new requirements of today's world. Since those proposals are radical in their purpose - to rid the Earth completely not only of nuclear but also of chemical and other types of weapons of mass destruction - they provide for the necessity of appropriate verification measures and strict compliance at each stage of implementation with the principle of undiminished security for all States. They are based on the premise that the USSR and the United States of America should set an example for other nuclear-weapon Powers by taking real disarmament measures.

A large-scale programme of "star peace" providing for the development of diversified peaceful co-operation in outer space in the interests of all States and for the establishment of a world space organization has been submitted to the United Nations. This objective is in sharp contrast to the dangerous "star wars" plans, and it is clear to any sensible person which of the existing alternatives best serves the interests of the inhabitants of the planet.

Indeed, if the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons is pursued in earnest and not for the sake of mere rhetoric, why choose to that end the much too dangerous and much too costly path for our planet of extending the arms race to outer space? Why abandon compliance with the treaties curbing the nuclear-arms race and undermine agreements strengthening stability? I am referring here to the strategic arms limitation treaties and the anti-ballistic missile treaty concluded between the USSR and the United States of America. Something must be wrong here, either with logic or true intentions, for there exists a simple and straightforward way - that of a mutual stage-by-stage elimination of nuclear weapons even before the end of this century. In the absence of nuclear weapons there will be no need for defence against such weapons.

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

It should be emphasized that the Soviet Union does not confine itself only to submitting proposals. Its constructive spirit and sincerity go far enough to introduce a new major element in international practice. The USSR has unilaterally taken large-scale measures of restraint and arms limitation: they include the obligation not to be the first to use nuclear weapons; the halting of measures undertaken in response to the deployment of United States nuclear missiles in Europe; the subsequent removal from alert status of a large number of medium-range missiles in Europe; the obligation not to place anti-satellite systems in outer space; and, above all, the unilateral moratorium valid since 6 August 1985 on all nuclear explosions.

The moratorium has been extended on four consecutive occasions, although it was obviously a difficult and security-threatening decision for the USSR to take, in view of the unabated and provocative continuation of testing of nuclear weapons in the United States. By virtue of the latest extension of the moratorium, the Soviet Union will observe the International Year of Peace with no nuclear testing. This is a practical example of a truly responsible approach to the problems of today's world - an example which gives mankind greater hope to relieve itself of the nuclear threat.

A mutual halt to and prohibition of nuclear testing by the USSR and the United States of America are important in themselves and, moreover, will constitute a real step towards nuclear disarmament. What is needed are not half-measure substitutes but a radical solution to the problem. The Byelorussian SSR expresses the hope that the United States will heed world public opinion and come to realize the need for halting nuclear-weapon tests.

The objective of the gradual elimination of nuclear weapons includes also a geographical component and issues related to the levels of conventional

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

armaments. Therefore, and in order to help to free Europe of nuclear weapons, it has been proposed that nuclear medium-range missiles be eliminated from that continent and nuclear-weapon-free zones established there. Besides, the Warsaw Treaty member States have also proposed to the States members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and all European countries a programme for reducing in the near future by one fourth the armed forces and conventional armaments in Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals.

New proposals have also been introduced allowing for finalization without any further delay of a convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons, the elimination of their stockpiles, and the industrial base for their production.

That is but a brief, overall list of the major proposals put forward by socialist countries. They are prepared to consider in earnest other countries' initiatives as well. This is our policy and it is based on the decisions of the Twenty-seventh Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and has its roots in today's realities. It has been dictated by our responsibility vis-à-vis the future and takes into account the legitimate concerns of all parties.

If no progress has been made so far in eliminating the nuclear space threat and reversing the arms race, that is only because progress can be achieved solely through combined efforts and shared awareness of our common responsibility. It is to be hoped that those to whom the States of the socialist community and the non-aligned countries have addressed their proposals will display genuine preparedness to engage in a two-way movement along the highway of disarmament.

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

There are those that claim that their arms build-up is for the sake of negotiations. From there, it is but a small step to conducting negotiations solely for the sake of the arms build-up. Indeed, the military potential intended to serve as a bargaining chip is steadily being increased. Unfortunately, it is not being accompanied by progress at the negotiating table. Why is that? The United States does not want to accept the fact that acting from a position of force is no way to reach honest agreements. The logical aim of such a policy is to force one's bargaining partner to his knees and impose inequitable solutions. That is impossible in today's world. The end result is increased nuclear tension. Does that best serve the vital interests of all nations, including the United States? Does it impart greater security to the world? The answer is self-evident; it is in the negative.

It is to be hoped that the pragmatism and sense of reality that are inherent traits of the Americans will not fall victim to the syndrome of thinking in military terms, and that realism and awareness of the need for a joint search for ways to normalize the international situation, put an end to the senseless arms race and eliminate nuclear weapons will prevail in United States assessments and actions. The agreement between the USSR and the United States on the summit meeting soon to be held in Reykjavik inspires optimism. It is important that that meeting pave the way to the achievement of meaningful agreements at future talks and meetings.

History has shown that militarist policies and the desire to attain world domination are increasingly isolated, both morally and politically, in the international arena. Vigorous attempts to implant militaristic stereotypes in people's minds have not had the expected result. The debate in the General Assembly leaves no doubt in this regard. At the same time, it can be said with utter certainty that no one is trying to drive the United States into a corner.

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

On the contrary, there is a common desire to involve the United States of America in sincere efforts to achieve a breakthrough in international relations, to awaken the United States to the need to fulfil its responsibility for the fate of peace on earth. Everyone is aware of the fact that without the constructive participation of the United States of America and other countries there can be no lasting solution to the problem of eliminating the threat of war and the persistent regional conflicts and to other global problems. Such an approach is manifest in the initiatives of socialist countries which envisage collective efforts, and in the Harare documents of the Non-Aligned Movement.

What, then, stands in the way? To a great extent, the impediment is anti-Soviet feeling and false perceptions of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Some people in the West have yet to realize that all peoples, communists including, have no less a right to life, their beliefs and their way of life than have anti-communists. Are those in Western ruling circles prepared to recognize those rights to socialism and to work together with it for peace? Can they overcome the inertia of the anti-communist mentality and adopt the position of the peaceful coexistence of States with different social systems?

We have heard from this rostrum allegations that Marxism-Leninism and war are inseparable. Let us recall a few of the facts, which are obviously well known to everyone, including those that make such statements. The first decree of the Soviet State was the Decree of Peace. That appeal, by the way, was rejected by capitalist States. Peace is the basis and the immutable precept of Soviet foreign policy. It is stated in the present programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union states that "A world without wars and without arms is the ideal of socialism." It is also well known that the USSR has never encroached upon the political institutions of other countries, whereas the Soviet State itself has on

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

more than one occasion been the object of armed intervention and aggression. Anti-sovietism is still felt today in political circles in some Western States. It is manifest in the unwillingness to respond in kind to the Soviet pledge not to make the first nuclear strike. Those unwilling to reciprocate understand that were they to do so the myth of communist aggressiveness would collapse and the ideological impetus that turns the dynamo of the arms race, which yields enormous profits to the military-industrial complex, would be weakened.

It is no less important to look for new approaches to the just settlement of regional conflicts. The cliché of East-West confrontation is inapplicable here. It is not only worn out but completely distorts the reality to which it is being applied. If there is a genuine desire to extinguish hotbeds of tension, we must tackle their socio-economic and political roots. It is there that the true source of conflicts is to be found, as well as in the denial of the right of peoples to self-determination and independence, to be free to choose their own path. Only through the solution of those root problems will it be possible to achieve genuine, just and comprehensive solutions.

In the Middle East such a settlement is possible through the collective efforts of all the parties concerned, on the basis of the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all Arab territories occupied since 1967 and the exercise of the inalienable national rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including the right to self-determination and to create their own independent State. The convening, without delay, of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, with the participation of all interested parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), would be a constructive step along the road towards such a settlement. That is the aim of the recent Soviet proposal calling for the creation of a preparatory committee for that Conference, with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

The peoples of Nicaragua, Afghanistan and Kampuchea have already made their choices by overthrowing anti-people régimes. All attempts to prevent them from pursuing their chosen path of building a new society should cease forthwith.

The explosive situation in southern Africa also calls for an urgent political settlement. It is necessary to step up the collective search for ways of guaranteeing the security of the independent African States of the region and achieving a just settlement in Namibia without delay, in accordance with United Nations decisions. The imposition of comprehensive mandatory sanctions against the racist South African régime would be an effective step towards independence for Namibia and the elimination of the inhumane system of apartheid. It would also help in the achievement of peace and stability, in the interest of all the peoples of the region, including the white population of South Africa.

The interests and aspirations of all the nations of the Mediterranean region, including Cyprus, Libya and Lebanon, would be well served by the creation of a zone of stable peace and co-operation in the region.

We continue our consistent support for the efforts of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to strengthen peace, bring about a relaxation of tensions in the Korean peninsula and achieve the peaceful reunification of Korea. The proposal of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to transform that region into a nuclear-free zone could become an important element in efforts to eliminate the threat of nuclear war.

The whole region of Asia and the Pacific is becoming a factor of ever-increasing importance in world affairs. A broad proposal for ensuring security and co-operation in that region through the collective efforts of States, as put forward by the Soviet Union, is in keeping with the idea of a comprehensive system of international security.

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

The problem of human rights must also be addressed seriously and consistently. What is necessary, is not just to mention the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also to work for the accession of States to such fundamental instruments in this field as the International Covenants on Human Rights, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid.

Regrettably, few of those posing as the principal advocates of human rights, are to be found on the lists of States parties to those instruments. The Soviet Union has proposed that all Governments adjust their internal legislation to comply with international norms in this field. Such an action would be natural, it would seem, as natural as ABC, but the same advocates of human rights are not in a hurry to react positively.

Respect for the socio-economic rights of peoples and for equal economic security for all States is also the key instrument to solve economic problems of the world. To ignore the demands for the restructuring of international economic relations on a just and democratic basis without discrimination, illegal blockades and sanctions, and to praise the anarchy of the market-place, is to be out of touch with reality. One might argue that this market anarchy creates wealth. Indeed it does, but only for the few. For the rest, market anarchy reveals its other face: unemployment, illiteracy, lack of medical assistance, lack of housing, injustice in international trade, the silken strangling cord of external indebtedness, and hunger that affects entire nations. Such an order is in no way acceptable for the majority of the inhabitants of our world.

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

The range of issues facing the United Nations is wide indeed. If they are to be resolved successfully, it is necessary to make collective efforts to increase the efficiency of the United Nations and to enhance its prestige.

However, a trend to the opposite on the part of certain Western States has emerged recently, that is, to undermine the Organization, to impede its activities, to bring tough pressure to bear on some Member States and to apply arbitrary discriminatory measures against others. We are witnessing a situation whereby the United Nations is being subjected to political-financial blackmail. In any society blackmail is considered to be an abominable phenomenon. It is doubly abominable when used against this universal Organization which is the symbol of mankind's hope for a better world.

What should be the position of States, if they are really seeking to promote mutual understanding and security? The present situation demands new approaches. The General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, stressed recently:

"Civilization is going through a crucial moment in its development. It is high time for all those capable of reasonable and sane thinking to adopt a clear-cut and well-defined position regardless of ideological and political differences. The machinery of mankind's self-preservation should be put into operation. There is no time to waste."

Human genius has created tremendous opportunities, and at the same time it has brought about a great threat to humanity. This dual character of today's potential emerged quite clearly against the backdrop of the accident at the Chernobyl atomic power plant, which has also affected Byelorussia; it is aggravated by the impossibility of relying entirely on technology, no matter how sophisticated

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

it may be, which the tragic death of American astronauts and systematic failures of computers have made so painfully obvious. Matter can release tremendous amounts of energy, which, if it gets out of control, is capable of wiping out life from the face of the Earth. A nuclear war, should it break out, would lead precisely to this outcome. There is, however, the highest form of matter, which is intellect. It can prevent the irreparable. Persistent and sincere efforts by all States, and all peoples, not lip-service, are needed now to prevent the triumph of blind and merciless forces over the collective intellect of humanity. The goal of the United Nations and of the current session of the General Assembly is to mobilize such efforts.

The forthcoming meeting of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Community Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the United States President, Ronald Reagan, which is welcomed with hope throughout the world, the success of the Stockholm Conference, the adoption by the International Atomic Energy Agency of important conventions which improve the security of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, as well as other encouraging developments in international affairs, make us increasingly confident that it is possible to arrive at agreements in the interests of peace, security, freedom, justice and co-operation.

Mr. BASENDWAH (Yemen) (interpretation from Arabic): As I stand before the General Assembly today to make a statement on behalf of my country, the Yemen Arab Republic, I find myself at a loss. Do I congratulate the President on his assumption of the presidency, or do I congratulate the Assembly. In any case, his election could not have been a more judicious choice in view of his conspicuous qualities and his long political experience.

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

His unanimous election to the presidency of this session can only be interpreted as an indication of the high regard in which the friendly and fraternal country of Bangladesh is held by the nations of the world. My delegation's pleasure in this appointment is all the greater in view of the fraternal bonds and ties of friendship, based on mutual respect and constructive co-operation, that exist between our two countries.

I should also like to express our appreciation and gratitude to his predecessor, Ambassador de Piniés, whose presidency of the fortieth session was a great honour for us. It is self-evident to say that he presided over that session with great competence and dedication, and in a manner which enabled him to merit all our approval and admiration.

I must also pay a tribute to the invaluable and constant efforts made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, and to his well-known sincerity and determination in the service of our Organization in particular, and the international community in general. I take this opportunity to renew our sincere wishes to him of continued good health, so that he can continue to perform his arduous tasks in the best possible manner.

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

During our last session, at which we celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations, the city of Geneva witnessed the first summit, after a lapse of some years, between the two super-Powers on 20 November 1985. But despite the high hopes pinned on that meeting it did not achieve sufficient *détente* or improvement in the international situation in general, and in the arms race in particular, to restore our confidence and peace of mind about the present and future of mankind. Hence we still harbour feelings of anxiety and apprehension, because the terrible arms race is as fierce as ever and shows no signs of slackening. In addition to the fact that the weapons of mass destruction have not been eliminated from the arsenals, such weapons are certain to destroy our world. In view of the persistence of this situation it is no wonder that life on this planet is subject to the danger of extinction at any moment, whether as the result either of a fit of anger on the part of one side or the other, or of an accidental error by one party. Just as our last session coincided with the first summit conference between the leaders of the two super-Powers, fate has decreed that our present session coincides with the second summit - scheduled to take place in three days in the capital of Iceland - to overcome problems whose settlement could have obviated the need for that meeting.

Moscow and Washington's agreement to meet at the highest level raises our hopes, and we trust that the results of the coming meeting on 12 October will not be as disappointing as those of the previous meetings. To be realistic, we hope that it will lead to specific agreements that will put an end, albeit gradually, to the frenetic race to procure the most deadly and destructive weapons, and will also lead to the elimination of the weapons of mass destruction in the arsenals of the two super-Powers.

We also hope that the two sides will achieve an agreement to keep outer space free from the arms race, in the hope that it will be a refuge for man if he has

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

nowhere to turn on earth, though God forbid that will ever happen. It is absurd to hear some recklessly advocating the militarization of outer space, as though this planet were too small for their destructive tendencies. Humanity faces enough danger to its presence on this planet. If the aim of this frenzied attempt to achieve supremacy over others is to attain sole hegemony over the nations of the world, it would be useful for those suffering under that illusion to realize that the gains earned by the friendship of peoples outweigh the gains earned by brute force. This persistent arms race prompts us to wonder whether humanity has indeed attained such a degree of affluence as to permit some to expend vast sums on this frenetic race. The answer is no.

What is undeniable and irrefutable is that many nations of the world are still suffering from poverty, starvation, underdevelopment and disease. Is it not then the duty of those who squander such vast sums on developing the means of destruction and annihilation to channel those funds, or at least some part of them, into the elimination of the hunger, poverty, underdevelopment and disease which afflict millions of people? We hope that the two major Powers will continue their meetings, because we hope that they will achieve important, specific results that would put an end to their frenetic rivalry in acquiring more weapons of mass destruction, and thus permit them to channel their energies into the service of humanity, and to eliminate their stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction.

The United Nations, which was created to contribute to the establishment of peace and security all over the world, is called upon to play a greater role in overcoming all impediments and obstacles on the path towards these agreements, so that man everywhere may enjoy peace of mind about his present and future.

My country, the Yemen Arab Republic, cherishes its membership in the Non-Aligned Movement because of its complete and profound belief that, as a developing country, non-alignment is the best approach it can adopt in the face of

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

all the pressures of international polarization to which, like numerous other States it is subjected. The growing membership of this Movement is confirmation of the magnitude of the growing recognition on the part of numerous States of the importance of non-alignment as the ideal option for maintaining their independence and national sovereignty, and for averting the danger of polarization.

In view of any ambiguity that might obscure the concept of non-alignment, I wish to take this opportunity to assure you that the concept of non-alignment subscribed to by our enlightened leadership under our brother the President, the Secretary-General of the General People's Congress, Colonel Ali Abdallah Salih, is a crystal clear ethical concept of principle. Non-alignment, as a concept and in practice, certainly does not mean neutrality between right and wrong; rather it means standing by what is right and championing it and standing against wrong and resisting it. While on the subject of non-alignment I should like to express my country's satisfaction at the success of the recent summit Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Harare, the capital of the friendly country of Zimbabwe. That success was one more illustration of the growing role played by the Non-Aligned Movement in supporting our supreme international Organization and its efforts to promote peace and justice in the world and to settle the international and regional disputes which abound in the international community. The success of that Conference also prompts us to praise the exemplary manner in which His Excellency the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Mr. Robert Mugabe, presided over the meetings of that Conference, and his constructive contribution to the achievements of the Conference, as reflected in its decisions and recommendations.

We would have liked to see the United Nations entering the fifth decade of its long life - God willing - in a world devoid of injustice, tension, and causes of conflict, poverty and hunger; but a cursory look at the globe suffices to cause concern and frustration. However, this does not negate the achievements of the

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

United Nations, reflected in its success in solving some problems that have developed during the past four decades and in championing the right of a number of peoples to determine their own future and win their freedom. But we must also acknowledge its failure to settle a number of crises and problems and to solve many political questions. But it is not fair to lay blame for that on the United Nations alone, because its ability to take effective action is conditional upon the degree of interaction between itself and international forces, and it derives its strength from the responsiveness of the Member States in general and the major Powers in particular.

One of the foremost among the outstanding and perennial questions is that of Palestine and the resulting strife, which has come to be known in the modern political lexicon as the Middle East crisis. Thirty-eight years have elapsed, yet the people of Palestine are still deprived of the same right to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State on their national soil as that enjoyed by other peoples in the world who have attained their rights and gained their independence.

This question has become a perennial item on the agenda of successive sessions of the General Assembly, as well as on the agendas of its subsidiary organs and bodies. The fact that this question has remained without any just solution, despite the innumerable resolutions of this Organization, is categorical proof of the success of some States in robbing the United Nations of its role and of its *raison d'être*.

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

I cannot think of any question which is more just and more deserving of concern and settlement than this question, especially since the rights of the matter are crystal clear. Since the United Nations is unable to redress the blatant injustice inflicted upon the victimized people of Palestine and accepts the aggressor, Israel, as one of its Members, to occupy a seat in this Hall, to run amok challenging its prestige, cynically disregarding its resolutions. It is no wonder that the peoples of the world have lost their confidence in the United Nations and have even come to ridicule its existence. If the Middle East crisis involves continuous strife and is a hotbed of international tension, it is because the question of Palestine, which, as we have previously declared, is the crux and essence of the strife in the area, is still unresolved.

But how can we find the way to a just solution of this question? How can we find the way to a settlement of the strife in the region based on justice, while Israel persists in its arrogance and aggression, occupying Palestine and the territories of neighbouring Arab States, and challenging the United Nations and the whole international community, without shame or scruple? How can we expect Israel to give up its policy of aggression and immature recklessness, and its practice of terrorism, as long as it receives all means of support and encouragement from a major international Power, the United States of America?

Unquestionably the fact that the question of Palestine has remained without a just solution for about four decades is an affront to mankind and proof of the failure of the United Nations to discharge its role and to fulfil its duties. It is no secret that Israel is responsible for the frustration of all the international efforts and endeavours, collectively and individually, designed to settle this just question.

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

There is near unanimity on the need to convene an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all parties to the Arab-Israeli strife, but those who are blocking the convening of such a conference, and even reject the idea, are Israel and its ally, the United States. Does anyone need further proof that Israel rejects peace? But if Israel is aspiring to impose the peace of capitulation, it is badly mistaken. And why does it insist on that kind of peace, and reject peace based on justice and right?

Be that as it may, the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations, with the the participation of all the parties concerned, foremost among which is the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of our brothers the Palestinian people, and the five States that are permanent members of the Security Council, remains in our view the proper framework for seeking an appropriate formula to solve the question of Palestine and the problem of the Middle East, and hence to establish a just and lasting peace in that sensitive part of the world.

Perhaps Israel entertains the dream that its occupation of Palestine and the Syrian Golan Heights, and the other parts it still occupies in Lebanon, will with the passage of time become an unchallengeable fait accompli, and thus acquire international legitimacy. If that is so, Israel must remember that Western colonialism, faced with the growing struggle of the peoples, had to depart from a large number of countries after an occupation which had in many cases lasted over a century. Thus, the fate of its occupation of the Arab territories, whether Palestine, Lebanon or Syria, will be no better than the fate of Western colonialism in the past.

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

It is high time for our Arab nation to put a prompt and decisive end to its prolonged suffering as a result of the implanting of Israel in the heart of the Arab homeland. The acts of aggression and the crimes committed by the Zionist entity over the past 30 years are more than enough to convince even its fervent partisans, foremost among them the United States of America, of the aggressive nature of this parasitical entity and of its arrogance and folly. But those biased in its favour see its vices as virtues, and its crimes as acts of heroism.

The United States, as a major Power, is now called upon to reconsider its position in support of Israel and to review its policy in order to play its role, with other major international Powers, in restoring justice and seeking a just solution to the question of Palestine and the crisis in the Middle East, in order to establish peace and justice. However, no international effort can succeed unless the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are restored and unless the occupied Arab territories are returned to their rightful owners.

The Arab States have affirmed the sincerity of their wish to restore a just peace in the region through their proposal reflected in the decisions of the twelfth summit Conference at Fez, and they reiterated their attachment to that proposal at their emergency summit Conference in August of last year.

Although that initiative won broad international support, Israel still rejects the establishment of a just and lasting peace, and continues to declare that rejection with arrogance and insolence. But the United Nations should not stand idly by in the face of this intransigent Israeli rejection. The United Nations must intensify its efforts to impose a just and lasting solution so that the area will not remain a hotbed of tension which could burst into flames at any moment.

Sufficient proof of the gravity of the continuing crisis in the Middle East is the widening cycle of violence, which has now encroached on other areas. But those

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

who have been up in arms as a result of some individual incidents should study and investigate the causes of the phenomena of individual terrorist acts in order to eradicate this scourge. Because, had it not been for the condoning of Israel's terrorism, which claims the lives of thousands of innocents, the acts of terrorism by groups or individuals claiming the lives of other innocents would not have taken place. We are against terrorism, but resistance to terrorism must also be aimed against Israeli terrorism.

Hence, those who condemn individual terrorism only, should also condemn Israeli terrorism, which is practised against the people of Palestine and Lebanon under the eyes of the whole world. There is no more heinous crime than collective terrorism. It is unacceptable that some parties on the international scene should view terrorism the way an Arab poet describes it: the murder of one person in a jungle is an unforgivable crime, while the murder of an entire people is open to debate. The logic of the double standard is completely unacceptable.

Individual terrorism, no matter how heinous, cannot be equated, in terms of either responsibility or results, with the terrorism practised by a State which, I regret to say, belongs to this and to other international organizations. Putting an end to Israeli terrorism and its occupation of Palestine, Lebanese territories and the Syrian Golan Heights, and the restoration of these territories to their rightful owners, would eradicate the phenomena of individual terrorism, which is considered a natural result of the negation of justice and the prevalence of the law of force, usurpation and aggression.

It is truly regrettable that the beginning of our current session coincides with the seventh year of the long and bloody war between Iraq and Iran. This is a

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

costly war. Thousands upon thousands have fallen in this war, to the point where its victims have exceeded one million. Numerous installations in both countries have been destroyed, and much of the infrastructure has also been destroyed. The Yemen Arab Republic, which has consistently called for an end to the bloodshed, sees this raging war as a wanton absurdity and a depletion of the capabilities of two peoples to whom we have been bound by ties of religion and good-neighbourliness since ancient times.\*

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\*The President took the Chair.

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

We appreciate the endeavours of the Secretary-General, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the Non-aligned Movement, and welcomed the initiative of Iraq last August and its readiness to accept a cease-fire. We therefore hope that Iran, for its part, will adopt a positive attitude by responding to that initiative and accepting the offers of mediation, because these continued hostilities threaten the entire area and are jeopardizing international peace and security.

The world should not stand idly by watching this bloody human tragedy. Hence we call upon the major Powers, and those in a position to do so, to play their role in putting an end to this destructive war before its sparks fly out in all directions to start a greater and more destructive fire.

Putting an end to this tragic war calls for the observance by the belligerents of an immediate cease-fire, the withdrawal of all forces to the internationally recognized boundaries and the holding of direct negotiations that would preserve the legitimate rights of each, in accordance with the rules of international law. Hence, Iran must express its readiness to agree to this and to follow the example of Iraq.

As regards the problem of Afghanistan, which remains unchanged, the Yemen Arab Republic, while welcoming the declaration by the Soviet Union of its intention to withdraw seven of its battalions from Afghanistan before the end of the year, supports all international efforts and endeavours directed to achieving a peaceful solution to this problem through negotiation among the parties concerned, with a view to enabling the Afghan people to exercise its right to sovereignty and to the choice of its own social and economic system free from all external pressures. We feel that any approach to solving this problem must provide for the need for the refugees return to their homes as soon as possible, and the cessation of all forms of foreign intervention.

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

While the problem of Cyprus still remains unresolved because of the difficulties encountered during the negotiations between the representatives of the two communities, it demands a redoubling of the international effort by the United Nations and an intensification of its endeavours to guarantee a continued dialogue between the two parties to the dispute, because dialogue is the optimum means of achieving a satisfactory settlement which guarantees for all freedom of religion and coexistence on the basis of equality of rights and duties within a single independent Cyprus.

In Africa, the occupation of Namibia by the racist régime of Pretoria is another grave challenge to the international community. Despite the numerous decisive resolutions adopted by the United Nations, the Pretoria régime arrogantly rejects them all, and insists on continuing its usurpation of this Territory.

Faced with this intransigent rejection by the racist régime, we must increase our support for the people of Namibia, under the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), its sole legitimate representative. This calls for increased pressure by the international community to break the vicious circle of this perennial problem by putting an end to the occupation of the territory by the racist régime of South Africa.

The actions and crimes of the racist régime against the Namibians and their militant leadership violate the most fundamental human rights and all the resolutions of the Organization in general, and Security Council resolution 435 (1978) in particular. Unless these resolutions are implemented, the Namibian people will remain a victim of the most heinous form of aggression, oppression and injustice practised against it by the racist régime of South Africa. Despite the continued condemnation by the international community of the practices of that odious régime, the mere presence of which is considered an affront to humanity, it still persists in defying world public opinion and all

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

resolutions of the United Nations and other organizations, and in continuing its flagrant violations of all international laws and norms.

In southern Africa itself, the same régime is still practising the hideous policy of apartheid, using all forms of humiliation, torture and oppression to deny the indigenous majority all its rights and to maintain its domination by oppressing the heroic resistance.

It is no wonder that this régime has no other ally or champion but Israel, since birds of a feather flock together. Both régimes are not only alien, but also have a racist and fascist doctrine. This binds them in an unholy alliance of collaboration far removed from ethics, honour and all other fundamental values and norms. It does not surprise us that Israel sides with the racist régime of South Africa, but we are surprised to see it getting support from States which pay lip service to freedom and consider themselves the champions of human rights. But why should we feel surprised when those same States also support Israel, the first ally of the Pretoria régime, and its counterpart?

With respect to Korea, my delegation would like to express its satisfaction at the desire of the Korean people in North and South Korea for reunification, and hopes that this lofty aim will be achieved peacefully and democratically, free from all external pressure or influence.

While my country feels highly gratified at the restoration of democracy in some Latin American countries, it is following with great concern the news about the armed clashes currently taking place in Central America. But we are firmly convinced that the solution to these problems lies in resort by the parties concerned to dialogue and peaceful means to arrive at a formula that will guarantee to each people in the area the right of self-determination and the right to choose its own régime without any foreign pressure.

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

The fact that the structure of current international economic relations remain unchanged, despite the obvious injustice it entails for the developing countries, will remain a major cause of tension in our world, because it has a continuing effect in widening the gap between developing and developed countries. This is because the latter regard the former as cheap sources of raw materials and as open markets for their manufacturers, instead of regarding them, as they should, as their partners in complementarity. The absence of the necessary equal footing between the two sides can lead only to more poverty for the poor and greater wealth for the rich.

In addition to the dangers inherent in the unjust international economic situation, the proliferation of adverse phenomena in the world economy, such as fluctuating currency exchange rates, the decline in commodity prices, the establishment of tariff and non-tariff barriers against exports from the developing countries, and the hampering of the transfer of technology from the industrial to the developing countries have all been exacerbating the economic crisis faced by many developing countries. While that has already been demonstrated by the depression and stagnation in international trade, the difficulties and pressures being endured by some countries burdened with debt, and in the faltering development plans in many third world countries, resulting in a decline in their social and economic growth rates, could, if the situation continues, lead to even more serious consequences. Unless the countries of the North are sufficiently responsive in their dialogue with the countries of the South and make some of the concessions needed from them, the world may suffer an economic catastrophe whose effects will not be confined to the developing countries but will inevitably spread to the industrial countries, and be reflected in the stagnation of their industries, depressed markets for their products and the deterioration of their economies.

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

In order to improve the quality of life in our world, there must be an absence of all forms of exploitation from international economic relations, so that there is an international economic order based on justice, interdependence, and complementarity, because the injustice suffered by the developing countries in their dealings with the developed countries will adversely affect all peoples, which in turn would lead to the emergence of political problems that would reduce many parts of the world to chaos. Political coexistence among the various nations of the world calls for the establishment of healthy relations among them on the basis of economic interdependence and complementarity, if not on a unity of interests.

Any hope for the recovery of the world economy will remain an illusion unless confidence is restored in the relations among the various parties. Moreover the wealth with which some States in the world are endowed, or which they gained in the past while other peoples were slumbering, and which has provided the basis of their growth and development, should not be the source of happiness for the few and misery for the many, if mankind is not to remain for ever divided between rich and poor. My country's choice of the democratic approach represents a final and irreversible decision. The general elections held a few weeks ago to broaden the base of the General People's Congress and the subsequent election of the members of the Standing Committee of that Congress by the representatives of the popular electoral base in full freedom and integrity, as acknowledged by both citizens and observers, was an affirmation of the determination of our national leadership, headed by our President, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and the Secretary-General of the General People's Congress, Colonel Ali Abdullah Saleh, to press ahead along the democratic path.

(Mr. Basendwah, Yemen)

The unity of Yemen is the loftiest objective of our peoples, and our national leadership loses no opportunity of affirming its commitment to that objective. We are still working with our brothers in the southern part of Yemen in order to achieve that objective as soon as possible.

Finally, I renew my call to the United Nations to redouble its efforts to solve all problems and questions, foremost among which are the questions of Palestine, the Middle East, South Africa and Namibia, so that they do not remain perennial items on the agenda of successive sessions of the General Assembly, as has been the case for years - nay, for decades - thereby making it possible for the Organization to regain its prestige and capability in the eyes of all peoples and nations.

I pray that God may grant guidance and success to the Assembly in the performance of its task.

ADDRESS BY MR. ALSADIG AL-MAHDI, PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE SUDAN

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Republic of the Sudan, Mr. Alsadig Al-Mahdi.

Mr. Alsadig Al-Mahdi, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Sudan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The PRESIDENT: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Republic of the Sudan, His Excellency Mr. Alsadig Al-Mahdi, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. AL-MAHDI (Sudan) (interpretation from Arabic): I extend to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on your election to the presidency of the forty-first session of the General Assembly. We would also like to thank the outgoing President for his contribution in presiding over the previous session.

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

I address the Assembly today in the name of the Sudanese people, who suffered years of misery and hardship under the rule of a tyrant who imposed an oppressive internal policy and adopted a subservient foreign policy thus making the Sudan a source of sadness and gloom. Freedom of expression in the Sudan became taboo, freedom was non-existent and the individual citizen was under a state of siege, threatened with detention, murder and limb amputation all in the name of religion. This was a distortion of a religion which uniquely sets adequate means for preventing crime before punishment and considers social factors as a cause for leniency and mitigation. It is a religion with an all-embracing outlook that grants rights first and punishes transgressions second. Under that despotic régime, the Sudan continued to be a source of tragic news, due partly to acts of man and partly to natural disasters such as drought, desertification and famine.

Today, I bring to this Assembly and to the international community good news from the Sudan. The drought is now over and the country is able once again to feed its people from its own resources. In the sphere of human endeavour, our people have, for the second time in one generation, risen to topple the tyranny of the despot in a popular movement of containment in which the people's uprising was complemented by the armed forces. This helped bring down tyranny without loss of life or property. A transitional civilian and military régime then came into power and ruled for one year on the basis of a national entente. At the end of that year there were free general elections throughout 90 per cent of the country. The absent vote of that 10 per cent was due to security reasons. A Government was returned with the support of 80 per cent of the members of the Constitutional Assembly and 90 per cent of the voters. It is a Government which draws support from the grassroots of the populace.

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

The newly born democracy in the Sudan guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, upholds the independence of the Judiciary, the rule of law and the freedom of religion. It has gone farther than the safeguarding of political rights and the freedom of expression and has striven to achieve ethnic and regional balance in the exercise of power, as well as regional economic balance, so that political democracy may go hand in hand with economic and social democracy.

This new Sudan is aware of the fact that it does not exist in a vacuum. It is cognizant of its deep Islamic, Arab and African roots and its awareness of these facets of this adherence reconciles their demands with an openness to the experiences of humanity and its intellectual, political, social, economic and technological achievements. Sudan, having completed the setting up of political institutions which will reflect its new orientation, has now launched a comprehensive national economic plan for the achievement of development with equitable social objectives. This new plan will put an end to the economic dependence to which my country fell victim, so that our economy may stand on our own indigenous capabilities. Our development plan will be an exercise in human engineering, aimed at saving the country from the accumulated shortcomings of the past years and ensuring a better more equitable life for our people.

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

This commitment to democracy makes it imperative to resort to peaceful means in solving problems, avoid military adventurism and take up arms only in self-defence.

Only dictatorships resort to military adventurism, as a means of diverting the attention of the people from their misery and seeking false glory. The democracies of free peoples are accountable for their actions and can propagate their ideals only through dialogue and persuasion. The Sudan's experience has taught us that dictatorial régimes are a psychological burden that weighs heavily on their peoples since they impose deceitful and oppressive policies. They are also a political burden that entails degradation and oppression, an economic burden because they squander resources through ill-conceived expenditure, and a military burden because they lead to internal confrontation and external adventures. The Sudanese experience has also taught us that a political system based on freedom of choice and committed to the objectives of social balance and justice is indeed the most appropriate choice, the choice most in keeping with human dignity and the surest way to stability and the attainment of peace, both internally and externally.

The new, promising Sudanese system, which has put an end to the flow of gloomy news and opened a new chapter of aspirations and hope, has galvanized the Sudanese people and given people everywhere cause for optimism. There are, none the less, hurdles in its path, and attempts are made to drag it back to a state of chaos and despotism. I shall highlight four of those hurdles because of their importance and because the international community has a crucial role to play in their removal.

The first problem is desertification. Many human factors have contributed to the encroachment of the desert on my country. Ill-conceived agricultural and pastoral policies, deforestation, lack of adequate fire control in the rural areas, and failure in the area of the protection of the environment and vegetation. Conceptual and administrative shortcomings have combined with these natural

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

national, regional and continental factors and caused desert encroachment of about 10 kilometres a year. In the Sudan, we give high priority to this problem and shall first undertake to increase the awareness of the people in this regard and put into effect sound and comprehensive plans to combat desertification and preserve our natural resources, which belong to both present and future generations.

An integrated national, regional and international effort must be made to study the causes of desertification, plan its containment and provide the technical, financial and administrative means to combat it. In this regard, we commend the contribution of the United Nations and request that it be intensified and given the special priority it deserves so that man may not lose irreplaceable resources.

Secondly, with regard to the refugee problem, Sudan has offered and continues to offer hospitality to the refugees who flee across its eastern, western and southern borders. Their numbers have increased enormously and now make up more than 10 per cent of Sudan's population. Such huge numbers put heavy burdens on Sudan's shoulders, some visible and quantifiable, others invisible and unquantifiable.

Sudan is committed to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of its neighbours and would like to see the refugees return voluntarily to their home countries. To that end, Sudan will spare no effort to find ways and means of bringing about the national reconciliation which would ensure their voluntary repatriation. Pending the achievement of that objective, it is essential to control the presence of refugees in Sudan in such a way as to ensure their living conditions and security and provide them with the necessary educational and health facilities, while avoiding an adverse impact on the life and security of the Sudanese people.

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

Planning requirements cannot be met and the financial, technical and administrative resources necessary for the achievement of those objectives cannot be provided from Sudan's resources alone. The international community must join in, and any failure to do so will certainly obstruct the Sudanese endeavour.

Our country has been visited by a United Nations inter-agency Mission representing many disciplines. The Mission has submitted a report the general thrust of which we support and welcome. We call for the intensification of efforts in the light of the contents of that report with a view to resolving the problems of refugees in the Sudan and supporting the Sudanese economy by eliminating the adverse effects of the presence of refugees. We appeal to the international community to make available the human and material resources necessary for the achievement of that objective.

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

The third problem is that of external debt. That debt was incurred by an unconstitutional, illegitimate régime and now amounts to more than double our gross national product. The cost of its servicing is far greater than the total of our export earnings. In such a situation, is it reasonable to call upon Sudan to repay the loans that have matured when it has just emerged from a situation in which both morals and production were sabotaged in such a way that Sudan, a country that once enjoyed relative prosperity, was brought into disrepute and mendicancy?

The first step that we shall take is to review the figures of that external debt so as to distinguish between what is legitimate and what is not. Matured loans will have to be dealt with, but not on the customary commercial basis. Our repayments will have to be within the limits imposed by the need to give priority to the livelihood of the Sudanese people and to provide a reasonable level of services for them and the level of development that the country requires. Those are priorities that no sane person can ask us to ignore. In the light of those priorities we shall allocate a certain percentage of our export earnings to meet part of our revised external debts.

While we declare this commitment, we shall continue to appeal to the rich creditor countries to take account of the circumstances that led to the accumulation of debts, especially in Sudan, which lost much of its human and material resources during 16 years of havoc and repression. While it may be our legal duty to remain committed to repayment of our debts, can it be a duty from the point of view of justice? We shall continue to appeal to continue to the rich countries to follow the example of Canada and Italy, which have taken decisions to alleviate the debt burden by freezing the debts or cancelling them altogether. Having said that, we must hasten to add that such measures will prove futile unless they are accompanied by economic and political reforms through which the gains accruing from such measures of alleviation are invested in development, in order to ensure a better life for the deprived classes.

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

The fourth problem is that of the rebellion in some parts of southern Sudan. First, objective, internal factors have caused tension between the north and the south of the country, the most important being religious and ethnic differences and differences in the levels of economic and social progress.

Secondly, those objective factors have been complicated by age-old historic and other factors created by colonial rule, when it followed its so-called policy on the south, between 1918 and 1948. That policy remoulded old conflicts into new shapes.

Thirdly, since Sudan's independence Sudanese society, especially in the north, has witnessed an Arab national renaissance movement and an Islamic awakening. During that period some sectors of the population in the south have developed an increasing consciousness of their African and Christian identities and a greater feeling of being deprived of participation in public life and of having a lower economic standard of life. The juxtaposition of those factors has led to political and cultural currents in the north and the south flowing in opposite directions.

Fourthly, under one-man rule there was implementation of the decisions of the All Sudanese Parties Congress, resulting in the signing of the 1972 agreement, which achieved the necessary reconciliation and provided room to embrace the characteristics of the south. But, surprisingly, that authoritarian régime reversed its stance and imposed on the south policies that broke the agreement; even worse, it shattered those respected and protected characteristics when it introduced what it called Islamic laws. In essence, that was nothing more than a wicked attempt to consolidate its one-man rule and intimidate all its opponents - Muslims, Christians and others - in the name of Islam. Those policies were opposed by many in the south, who regarded them as a flagrant example of the Government's renegeing on the peace agreement and of religious intolerance and oppression.

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

Fifthly, as being fully aware of the magnitude of the problem, the present political leadership in the Sudan has called for the convening of a national constitutional conference to examine those and other problems in the country as a whole so as to arrive, through dialogue, at an agreement to lay just and acceptable foundations for dealing with the following problems: first, the problem of religion and politics, which has to be solved in a way that will satisfy the aspirations of Muslims, Christians and the followers of other creeds within a modern democratic political and constitutional system; secondly, the problem of national identity and cultural and ethnic diversity, which must be solved in a way that will define the various identities and their means of coexistence; thirdly, the question of equitable participation in public and political life, which must be dealt with in such a way as to ensure respect by the majority of regional and ethnic rights in an equitable partnership; fourthly, the question of economic development and the commitment to an equitable distribution of wealth and public services and development opportunities.

These four points throw light on the objective and internal causes of the problem of the south. It is obvious that they are to be found on the same scale in other countries; they are not unique to the Sudan.

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

Although Sudan is among those countries confronted with problems caused by a backward structure of national unity and the trauma of modernization together with the complexities of the increasing consciousness of origins and roots, it stands out as a country that is able to diagnose and recognize its own problems and has the determination to resolve them peacefully through political dialogue.

The movement engaged in the present insurrection, which is causing destruction in some parts of the South and which endangers the lives of some of its civilian inhabitants, is quite aware of the peaceful and conciliatory policies of the Government. It has openly made this awareness known in a public statement on 14 August 1986. In spite of all this, however, the insurrection movement has opted for the rejection of the Government's stance and chose to escalate its terrorist activities against civilians, the aged, women and children. The most heinous of those terrorist acts was the downing of a civilian aircraft and the killing of all of its 60 passengers.

The terrorist nature of this movement no longer needs proof. Its deeds and declarations speak for themselves. What really needs proof is the movement's inability to make independent decisions and its subservience to the hegemony of a foreign country which uses it for its own interests.

Through our own contacts and discussions, it has become clear to us that it is feasible to reach an agreement with the insurrection movement but only if orders to the contrary are not dictated to it by the foreign circles that want to use it to block the reconstruction of our country. Those foreign circles fully dominate the decisions of this insurrection movement, which calls itself the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, by harbouring it in their territory, facilitating its recruitment activities, supplying it with arms, providing it with training, a radio station for broadcasting its propaganda and beaming military orders to its forces,

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

and also providing it with food, supplies, logistical support and transport facilities.

In its internal dimensions and root causes, the conflict can be addressed by the Sudanese parties in a way that would have required or necessitated no debate or involvement on the part of the United Nations. However, the insurrection movement has gone beyond its Sudanese dimension and has become a terrorist instrument of foreign aggression. It is in this context that it is now necessary for the United Nations to be made aware of the objective realities of the situation, realities which we have already placed before the Organization of African Unity.

The new democratic Sudan which draws inspiration from its past and looks hopefully towards its future is moving towards national reconstruction internally and just peace externally. It is determined to overcome all obstacles. The international community is called upon to play its role in creating a favourable international environment based on co-operation and non-aggression.

The international community is preoccupied with many issues but here I should like to draw attention to five important questions.

The first concerns the United Nations itself. The United Nations is the only world forum where Member States can exchange views and experiences and peacefully resolve conflicts on the basis of equality. Together with its specialized agencies, it has played a considerable role in the maintenance of peace and the promotion of international economic and technical co-operation.

The United Nations membership has grown steadily over the past 40 years. Its bodies and committees have indeed multiplied. This expansion has had a negative impact on the effective utilization of its resources and its ability to co-ordinate its numerous and sometimes overlapping activities. It has become necessary now to study the administrative and financial shortcomings of the Organization with a view to drawing up a comprehensive plan to improve its administrative and financial

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

performance along the lines of the recommendations of the Group of Intergovernmental Experts.

In the light of the experience of four decades, the Charter of the United Nations should be revised to incorporate new provisions, such as economic rights, protection of the environment and outer space, and particularly to enhance the effectiveness of the means of maintaining peace and security. In this context, we believe that permanent membership of the Security Council should be expanded to give a seat to every recognized regional group and that the General Assembly should be empowered to override, by a certain majority, a veto in the Security Council, in order to ensure that no one permanent member may be able to paralyse the international will as expressed by a large majority of Member States.

Going beyond criticism of the functioning of the United Nations to questioning its value is an unfortunate trend that represents an attitude of despair and offers oblivion as an alternative to imperfection. The proper attitude now is to recognize the imperfections of the Organization, remove their root causes and make the United Nations what we all wish it to be, now and in the future.

The second question is that of the arms race. It has become part of human nature to be armed and militarily ready, as a reflection and a result of social and other forms of competition. However, this has now reached a point where not only are human and other resources wasted, and the environment polluted, but humanity itself is threatened with extinction. Halting the conventional and nuclear-arms race, through bilateral or multilateral negotiations, is therefore of vital importance so that we may release the necessary resources for global prosperity, protect the environment and, above all, avoid a nuclear holocaust.

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

It is the duty of all mankind to reach an agreement to protect outer space from the arms race, limit and eliminate arsenals of destructive weapons and ban the development and stockpiling of chemical and biological weapons. The greatest threat to humanity today is the development of highly destructive nuclear weapons, the existence of large stockpiles of such weapons, sufficient to destroy the whole world many times over, and the computerization of control over the complex weapons systems. Everyone, no matter how reckless, knows that there would be no victor in a nuclear war. Modern nuclear capability is like a boomerang; one cannot hit a target without hitting oneself. Fear alone ensures that no conscious decision to start a nuclear war will be taken, but what of a computer error? A nuclear war triggered by computer error is a possibility and a threat that should be seriously contemplated. It is a moral responsibility of the international community in general and the members of the "nuclear club" in particular to give earnest consideration to such dangers and ways and means of defusing them. It is in this context that we welcome the forthcoming Soviet-American summit and hope that the two super-Powers will spare no effort to make it a success, in the light of the great expectations of the peoples of the whole world.

The third question concerns the international economic order. Response to the challenge of overcoming underdevelopment and achieving development is a major responsibility of the developing countries and their peoples and Governments. Determination, mobilization, serious planning and effective management are necessary to achieve that goal. However, as long as imbalance and inequity of the the international economic, financial and trading systems continue, the international climate will remain unfavourable and impede the achievement of development and social justice.

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

Several proposals and recommendations from various sources - notably the Brandt Commission - have emphasized the positive role that the developed countries can play in creating a favourable international economic climate. Action on those proposals is urgently needed.

Long and useful deliberations have taken place in the United Nations, in particular during the special session on the critical economic situation in Africa. Many African countries are becoming increasingly dependent on external financing. Developed Western countries are busy preaching to and lecturing Africans, while developed Eastern countries are busy criticizing Western policies and positions. Those attitudes are neither healthy nor helpful to Africa. African countries should shoulder their national responsibilities and mobilize the national energies and capabilities. The international community should respond by creating the necessary international economic and financial climate, which should be characterized by a rational distribution of global resources and the much-needed reform of the economic, financial and trading systems. That requires a degree of political will in developed countries to strive to promote on a global scale the kind of prosperity and social peace that they have achieved.

I shall now refer to five hotbeds of tension that constitute a major challenge for the international community and call for serious, intensified international action to resolve them and thus defuse the threat they pose to peace and security.

The first is Africa's hotbed - South Africa and Namibia. The very existence of the system of apartheid in South Africa is an affront to humanity. It is absolutely necessary that the international community adopt a firm and unambiguous stand against that abhorrent régime through the imposition of comprehensive mandatory sanctions until it is brought down or made to agree to set up a just

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

democratic system based on majority rule. We welcome, in this context, the action by some Western Governments and parliaments, most recently the United States Congress. We hope that those first steps will be followed by others and consolidated to ensure the effectiveness of sanctions against the racist Pretoria régime in South Africa.

The continued illegal occupation of Namibia by the racist South African régime, in violation of the relevant United Nations resolutions, constitutes one of the principal sources of changes to international peace and security in Africa. That, too, requires firm international action to isolate the racist régime and force it to withdraw unconditionally from Namibia and thus enable the Namibian people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

The second hotbed is the Arab's major cause - the question of Palestine. Just as the intransigent and aggressive policies of racist South Africa constitute a threat to world peace, so the usurpation by Israel of the rights of the Palestinians and its occupation of neighbouring Arab lands since 1976 constitute a similar threat to world peace. A just and lasting peace can be achieved only through full recognition of the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination, to return to their homeland and to create their independent State on their national soil of Palestine. It is evident that the best forum for the search for a just peace would be provided by the convening of an international conference under United Nations auspices, with the participation of all the parties concerned, especially the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

The next burning issue is the primary Asian problem, namely, that of Afghanistan. We look forward to an independent Afghanistan, free from any foreign presence. In that connection we welcome the partial withdrawal of Soviet troops, which we hope is a first phase to be followed by others. We also welcome the Afghan-Pakistan negotiations and hope that they will be widened to include all the Afghan parties so that a comprehensive peaceful solution may be achieved. We also commend the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General and call upon him to play a role in realizing that objective.

The fourth hotbed of tension is in Central America. The solution to that problem lies in the strong tide of democracy that has arisen in the region. We hope that that tendency will be consolidated and that it will be accompanied by the cessation of foreign intervention and interference, so that the countries of the region may enjoy democracy and national independence.

The next world problem is also a problem for the Islamic world in particular, namely, the Gulf war. No one can dispute the fact that the Gulf war has resulted in huge losses of life and property; nor can there be any disagreement that the war will not resolve the long-standing, historical differences between the warring parties. It must be stopped, and all problems, inherited and new, must be resolved through peaceful negotiations.

It is legitimate to ask how that war can be stopped. If the answer to that question is not to lead to a dead end, the ending of the war must be based on a clear desire on both sides to stop it and on agreement on how best to do so. Various parties, such as the Muslim ulema and Islamic popular movements, must play a part in putting an end to the war. The United Nations, too, has a role to play, in investigating the underlying causes of the dispute and the events that led to

(Mr. Al-Mahdi, Sudan)

its outbreak and in assessing the resultant losses and determining the reparations that can pave the way to peaceful consideration of the issues involved.

While calling upon the Muslim ulema and Islamic popular movements to contribute to creating a climate of opinion on ways to put an end to the war, we also call upon the United Nations to renew and continue its endeavours to bring the war, which has resulted in such enormous losses, to a just and definitive end. The achievement of a just and decisive conclusion to the war has become both an Islamic and a humanitarian duty.

The United Nations is called upon to contain all these hotbeds of tension, the existence of which constitutes a major challenge to the international community and at the same time presents the Organization with an opportunity to prove its worth and its relevance to the well-being of mankind and its aspirations to a better future.

The new Sudan, together with all other well-intentioned members of the international community, stands ready to play its part in enhancing the mission of the United Nations and improving its performance, in order to make it a true guardian and impregnable bastion of peace and international co-operation, the prerequisites for survival on this planet, which the revolution in communication and technology has turned into a village with a common destiny.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Republic of the Sudan for the important statement he has just made.

Mr. Alsadiq Al-Mahdi, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Sudan, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.