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Chairman: Mr. PIBULSONGGRAM (Thailand)

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AGENDA ITEM 74: COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE WHOLE QUESTION OF PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS IN ALL THEIR ASPECTS

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 74: COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE WHOLE QUESTION OF PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS IN ALL THEIR ASPECTS (A/46/169 and Add.1, 185, 254)

1. Mr. GOULDING (Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs) said the peace-keeping operations has expanded dramatically over the past year, with the establishment of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM), the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), the Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara (MINURSO), the United Nations Angola Verification Mission II (UNAVEM II) and the United Nations Observer Group for the Verification of the Elections in Haiti (ONUVEH), the latter having had the same requirements as a peace-keeping operation. UNAVEM I and the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) had been successfully closed.

2. There was a clear trend towards more numerous operations on a larger scale to implement and monitor agreements already reached; examples were the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC) and the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The conclusions to be drawn were, firstly, that there was a continuing requirement for military personnel, under the command of the United Nations, to carry out peace-keeping functions, and secondly, that peace-keeping itself was in an evolutionary phase in view of the new tasks which it now encompassed, thus representing an area of enormous dynamic growth.

3. The administrative and financial difficulties which prevented the Secretariat from reacting with the required speed to urgent political situations must be imaginatively addressed, and he stressed in that connection the vital importance of having a reserve stock of equipment and a working capital fund. Member States should ensure that advance funding was available prior to approval of the budget in order to avoid a delayed deployment of material and human resources, which would not only contradict the wishes of the Member States, but would also be politically difficult to accept.

4. Response to the questionnaire asking Member States to comment on the personnel and equipment to be contributed to peace-keeping operations, had, regrettably, been poor, which had rendered it impossible to carry out the intended task of establishing and regularly updating a comprehensive computerized register of the contributions to peace-keeping operations which Member States were ready and able to make. Given that the register was an essential tool for pursuing the Secretary-General's policy of widening cooperation, he urgently requested Member States to submit their replies as early as possible.

5. The reports requested by the General Assembly, including the Standard Operating Procedures and training modules made available through the Military Adviser's Office to interested Member States, in addition to documents

(Mr. Goulding)

A/46/169 and Add.1, A/45/594 and A/45/185 and Corr.1, were more satisfactory. The only pending report was that on the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia, which, due to the large volume of material involved, was not ready for the current session. It was hoped, nevertheless, that a document identifying the lessons learnt from the planning and implementation of that operation would be issued in time for the spring session of the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations.

6. Mr. KIRSCH (Canada), introducing the report of the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations (A/46/254), said that peace-keeping operations had continued to expand in number and scope, and the work of the Special Committee needed to keep pace with the rapid developments on the international stage. The report reflected continuing progress in a number of areas, as well as the persistence of problems largely beyond the Committee's control.

7. Although fewer than in previous years, the observations made by Member States in response to the Secretary-General's invitation and the call made in General Assembly resolution 45/75 had greatly facilitated the Committee's work, as had the contributions from observer States. A further feature of the 1991 session had been the unprecedented interaction between the Special Committee and the United Nations Secretariat, reflected in the attendance of the relevant Secretariat officials at virtually all meetings.

8. Bureau Working Paper No. 2, contained in annex 1 to the report, reflected the view of many delegations that the working group should focus on a limited number of topics for in-depth discussion listed under four main headings: resources, financing, institutional issues and other issues. The 33 conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraph 79 of the report broadly followed that same structure, which would also be used in the annual resolution.

9. Reserves of personnel and equipment were the mainstay of any operation, but were of no use in themselves unless accompanied by the necessary preparation and training. With commitments increasing and resources declining, it was essential that the most effective use be made of available resources. The potential for increasing the employment of civilian peace-keeping operations had been fully discussed, largely on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General on that subject. A number of delegations had regretted that the report on the United Nations Transition Assistance Group in Namibia had not been available, since it might have contained valuable lessons for the future. Meanwhile, the Committee's report recommended that the Secretary-General should continue to consider using civilian personnel as appropriate, "taking into account the operational and other relevant needs, as well as the requirement of cost-effectiveness".

10. The report contained a number of specific recommendations on training, calling upon the Secretary-General and States to contribute to better coordination, mutual assistance and standardization. There was a growing awareness of the importance of training and the need for States with

(Mr. Kirsch, Canada)

experience and facilities to assist others less well-endowed in those areas. Many delegations had supported the proposal made by Singapore that the Secretary-General should study the establishment of an annual peace-keeping fellowship programme, possibly modelled on the similar and successful programme operated for some years by the Department for Disarmament Affairs. The Special Committee welcomed the replies to the Secretary-General's questionnaire on resources, but was disappointed that they had been so few in number. The report called on those States which had not yet done so to submit their replies.

11. A sound and secure financial basis, which was a prerequisite for successful peace-keeping operations, required a combination of political will on the part of the Security Council and the General Assembly and sound management on the part of the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. He endorsed the Secretary-General's recent warning to delinquent States that unless obligations were met the United Nations would be rendered incapable of performing its far-reaching functions, especially in maintaining peace and security.

12. Sadly, there was little new in the Special Committee's conclusions and recommendations, and it could only again urge States to meet their collective responsibilities and ask those States in a position to do so to contribute even more. That, together with sound financial management by the Secretariat, was the only way to ensure that the situation improved and that troop-contributing States could be reimbursed.

13. With regard to institutional issues, the Special Committee acknowledged the increased workload of the Secretariat and made a number of suggestions for increasing its capacity for planning and managing operations. With regard to the Committee itself, the report noted that, while useful, the informal consultations on peace-keeping matters had not been fully adequate and it therefore proposed that the Committee hold open-ended informal consultations throughout the year, given that, with peace-keeping evolving so rapidly, it needed to be kept fully informed and to have the option of meeting when necessary.

14. The question of preventing conflicts had been widely discussed in various United Nations bodies and in the Special Committee, and it was generally agreed that the subject needed to be further explored. The need for early warning of developments had been fully recognized and the role of the Office for Research and the Collection of Information noted.

15. The Special Committee also felt that it would be useful to pursue its exchange of views on the role of civilians in peace-keeping operations, especially the new aspect of their involvement in elections and referendums, and on the expanding role of United Nations civilian police.

(Mr. Kirsch, Canada)

16. Peace-keeping had developed over the years and was seen as one of the more successful aspects of United Nations operations, enjoying the support of all Member States. With the expanding scale and scope of peace-keeping activities, there was a need for a generally acceptable declaration on United Nations peace-keeping operations and, with that in view, one delegation had drawn up a draft text, included as annex II to the report. The Committee felt that the question required further discussion.

17. He then referred to the need to include in the preambular section of the annual draft resolution a paragraph concerning the essential function of United Nations peacemaking activities performed in the maintenance of international peace and security. The paragraph was designed to meet the need for a reference to the Secretary-General's peacemaking activities in one of the General Assembly resolutions, in order to provide a proper legislative basis to allow the Fifth Committee to allocate appropriate financial resources to those activities. Both the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General shared the view that the Special Political Committee was the most appropriate forum, and the resolution on the current item the most appropriate instrument, for dealing with the matter. With the expansion of the Secretary-General's peacemaking activities in recent years, traditional, ad hoc sources of funding were no longer adequate and the paragraph in question was designed to rectify that situation. Although the text had not yet been finalized, it was expected in essence to recognize that the Secretary-General's peacemaking activities constituted an essential function of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security.

18. On a more general note, the Special Committee was the only United Nations body where States could express their views on what peace-keeping was and should be and how it should be conducted and it was to be hoped that the Security Council, the budgetary and administrative organs of the Assembly, the Secretariat and States themselves would hear and heed those views. In view of its special importance, and given the speed of current events, the Committee should meet more frequently than once a year, as indeed it had done in the past.

19. In conclusion, the major problem for peace-keeping was that of resources, especially financial resources. It was no good for some States to pay lip service within the Special Committee to the need for sound finance but then to look the other way when required to pay their assessed contributions. That practice was not only a clear violation of the United Nations Charter and therefore of international law, but was also inconsistent with the collective commitment to peace-keeping. It placed the Organization in an intolerable situation which could not be sustained much longer without extremely negative consequences.

20. Mr. FREUDENSCHUSS (Austria) said that the agreements reached to continue the debate on peace-keeping operations were an encouraging initial step forward. In view of its wide mandate, the Special Committee was best qualified to tackle the issues concerned. He was convinced that United Nations peace-keeping operations would ultimately prove their importance in the prevention of conflict in accordance with the authority vested in the Organization under its Charter. Moreover, such operations, including fact-finding and special observer missions in areas of tension and potential conflict, could also be used as a significant preventive measure in the peaceful settlement of disputes. If it were shown that tension could be defused by such means, parties to a dispute would be potentially more willing to resort to the United Nations, particularly since their consent would be required for measures beyond the scope of Chapter VII of the Charter, thereby alleviating any concerns regarding interference in internal affairs. The same applied to requests for the United Nations to become involved in the monitoring or supervision of elections; in Haiti, for example, a stronger security element than that provided for in resolution 45/2 might well have precluded events such as those recently witnessed in that country. Those events, in tandem with developments in northern Iraq and Yugoslavia, had lent credence to his delegation's suggestion in 1990 of a detailed study of the situations which would justify United Nations involvement.

21. There was also a need for further thought about the overall issue of collective security and the mechanisms for reacting to aggressions and threats to international peace and security. Various suggestions had been made in that respect, inter alia by the Secretary-General and the Soviet Union. Such issues were admittedly not a traditional part of peace-keeping, but if the Special Committee merely sought to preserve existing structures while disregarding new developments that required new answers, it would become irrelevant.

22. Mr. VAN SCHAİK (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the members of the European Community, said that they attached great importance to the use of peace-keeping operations by the United Nations and had always contributed actively to them. The recent improvement of the international political climate had reinforced and enhanced the role such operations could play in the containment and solution of regional conflicts.

23. The views of the Twelve on peace-keeping operations were already well-known; he wished at present to touch on three aspects which they regarded as vitally important to the future development of such operations. The first concerned preventive diplomacy and the possible uses of peace-keeping operations to that end. The Gulf crisis and the ensuing war had highlighted the need for such diplomacy. The Twelve would make preventive diplomacy a top priority to help avert future conflict, for example, by making clear to potential aggressors the consequences of their actions. There was clearly a place for the dispatch of United Nations observer missions, either civilian or military, to deal with threats to international peace and security. The process of preventive diplomacy could also be enhanced through the formulation

(Mr. Van Schaik, Netherlands)

by the Security Council of political statements in the early stages of a potential conflict situation. Further study of the viability of a preventive role for peace-keeping operations was required. In that context, the Twelve also attached special importance to the draft declaration on fact-finding to be adopted by the current General Assembly.

24. A strengthened role for the United Nations in conflict prevention would be fully compatible with Article 1 of the Charter, which provided that the United Nations should take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace. In that context, the Twelve would emphasize the importance of keeping the basic principles of peace-keeping in mind.

25. The second important aspect was the recent tremendous expansion of peace-keeping operations from maintaining buffer zones to such tasks as organizing and monitoring elections, monitoring human rights situations and, possibly, establishing a transitional authority.

26. A third aspect of peace-keeping operations was the financial one. In past years, the Twelve had contributed some 38 per cent of the total budget of those operations, apart from their contributions in other forms. For the United Nations to be effective, it was of the utmost importance that peace-keeping operations should be on a sound financial basis. In that context, the Twelve welcomed the report of the Group of Friends of the President of the Security Council of 31 May 1991 concerning UNFICYP and took note of the Secretary-General's recommendations for putting the Force on a sound and secure financial basis (S/23144). They urged all Member States to fulfil their responsibilities and pay their assessed contributions in full and on time. The non-payment or late payment of contributions placed an additional, unfair burden on troop-contributing Governments.

27. Those three aspects required further work by the United Nations, including the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations and the Fifth Committee. The Twelve welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the Secretariat units dealing with peace-keeping and the Model Agreement with countries contributing personnel, elements of which could be further discussed in the Special Committee. The Twelve remained convinced of the value of peace-keeping operations in all their aspects and were prepared to continue to participate actively in the discussions concerning their future development as well as to contribute to present and future United Nations operations.

28. Mr. NIETO (Argentina) said that the quantitative and qualitative increase in Argentina's participation in peace-keeping operations was evidence of its support for that aspect of the Organization's work. Those operations were not, however, an end in themselves but rather a means to an end, the maintenance of international peace and security. They should not therefore be perpetuated indefinitely, and the Security Council should regularly review the mandate of each operation in the light of the development of the conflict or

(Mr. Nieto, Argentina)

situation involved. Although that would not guarantee a solution to the conflict, it might help to ensure that the parties to a dispute were aware that their progress towards resolving it was being monitored.

29. In the light of the new opportunities offered by the new international climate of cooperation and the increased responsibilities being assumed by the United Nations in the field of peace-keeping, the institutional, budgetary, theoretical and practical structure of peace-keeping operations should be reviewed and strengthened. The increased attention being paid to conflict prevention, peace-making and preventive diplomacy was gratifying, and the international community was moving towards the establishment of a consensual basis on which those ideas could be given practical application.

30. The Special Committee had done valuable work during the current year, particularly with regard to training for peace-keeping operations and the restructuring of the Secretariat units involved in those operations. Adequate training of the military and civilian personnel involved in such operations was essential, and Argentine personnel participating in future peace initiatives would benefit by taking part in training programmes organized by countries or groups of countries with experience in that field. Similarly, any special experience they had acquired could be shared with personnel from other countries participating or wishing to participate in such operations in the future.

31. In connection with the report on the Secretariat units dealing with peace-keeping operations (A/46/169 and Add.1), he said that while the dedication and efficiency of the Secretariat officials concerned was unquestionable, it must be recognized that they were sometimes overwhelmed by the amount of work involved and the lack of time to accomplish it, especially in the initial stages of an operation. His delegation looked forward to the report the Secretary-General had requested from independent experts on that subject.

32. Mr. ENGFELDT (Sweden), speaking for the Nordic countries, noted that the role of the United Nations in peace-keeping was expanding steadily, and that it was increasingly seen as indispensable by the international community. It was encouraging also that the United Nations had in recent years successfully completed a number of operations, as that underlined the principle that such operations were temporary measures.

33. The broadening of the tasks of peace-keeping operations represented a significant evolution in the role of the United Nations. In recent years several ideas had been put forward on how to shape the United Nations into an even more effective tool in that respect, not least in the area of conflict prevention. The time should now be ripe to transform some of those ideas into specific proposals on possible elements of an integrated United Nations approach to peacemaking, peace-keeping and, as a last resort, enforcement action. The Nordic Governments had presented some proposals in that field

(Mr. Engfeldt, Sweden)

(A/46/591). They strongly supported the peace-keeping operations of the United Nations and had taken part in almost all of them. They welcomed the increase in the number of troop-contributing countries and were pleased that new peace-keepers also came from geographic regions not previously represented.

34. Over the years general agreement had emerged on certain fundamental principles on which peace-keeping operations should be based. The involvement and support of the Security Council was crucial. A sound and secure financial basis for peace-keeping efforts was also required. It was thus unfortunate that ongoing operations suffered from insufficient financial resources, and particularly that the start-up phase of several operations had been jeopardized for that reason. An appropriate arrangement was necessary to ensure sound and secure start-up financing of peace-keeping operations, and the Nordic Governments therefore supported the idea of establishing a separate start-up fund, financed by assessed contributions, for that purpose. They wished also to register their deep dissatisfaction with regard to the still unresolved issue of the financing of UNFICYP, and their belief that efforts to place UNFICYP on the same financial basis as other operations could no longer be postponed.

35. The report of the Special Committee was the result of an in-depth discussion of a limited number of topics. That efficient way of working should be maintained, and the Special Committee should also continue to arrange open-ended informal consultations on a regular basis and to use such consultations for briefings on peace-keeping matters.

36. As the Under-Secretary-General had pointed out, only 45 Member States had so far responded to the Secretary-General's questionnaire on the contributions they were prepared in principle to make to peace-keeping operations. The Nordic countries urged all Member States to do so. They also wished to express their appreciation of the comprehensive reports prepared by the Secretariat, especially the Training Guidelines for National or Regional Training Programmes and the Guideline Standard Operating Procedures for Peace-keeping Operations. Training and education were important prerequisites for effective peace-keeping, and the United Nations should play a more active and coordinating role in that field. New York-based institutions like UNITAR could contribute constructively to such efforts. The interest shown by many Member States in the joint Nordic training system was encouraging, and the Nordic countries remained willing to share their experience with other Member States. They had noted with satisfaction the Secretary-General's plan to review the planning and management of peace-keeping operations and other special missions, and looked forward to studying his conclusions.

37. In the new international climate of cooperation, it was possible to make full use of the existing United Nations machinery for peacemaking and peace-keeping, and Member States had a responsibility to do so. Peace-keeping operations could be seen as one of the key elements in an integrated United Nations approach to strengthening international peace and security. The

(Mr. Engfeldt, Sweden)

emphasis should be on prevention, through activities including anticipatory discussions in the Security Council, actions by the Secretary-General under Article 99 of the Charter and the sending of fact-finding missions. Consideration should be given to the early launching of United Nations peace-keeping operations as a deterrent to potential armed conflicts. Preventive deployment of peace-keepers, for example, in conjunction with fact-finding or monitoring missions, might defuse tense situations. However, for the United Nations to be able to engage effectively in preventive actions adequate financial resources must be ensured. The Organization's capacity to collect data and monitor conflicts must be enhanced. Ongoing efforts to streamline and make the present system for peace-keeping operations more efficient should be encouraged.

The meeting rose at noon.