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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE TWO THOUSAND
EIGHT HUNDRED AND THIRD MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 22 March 1988, at 11.30 a.m.

President: Mr. PEJIC

(Yugoslavia)

Members:

Algeria
Argentina
Brazil
China
France
Germany, Federal Republic of
Italy
Japan
Nepal
Senegal
Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics
United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland
United States of America
Zambia

Mr. DJOUDI
Mr. DELPECH
Mr. NOGUEIRA-BATISTA
Mr. DING Yuanhong
Mr. BLANC
Count YORK von WARTENBURG
Mr. BUCCI
Mr. KAGAMI
Mr. RANA
Mr. BA

Mr. LOZINSKY

Sir Crispin TICKELL
Mr. OKUN
Mr. ZUZE

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The meeting was called to order at 11.35 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted.

LETTER DATED 17 MARCH 1988 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF NICARAGUA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL (S/19638)

The PRESIDENT: In accordance with the decisions taken at the 2802nd meeting I invite the representative of Nicaragua to take a seat at the Council table; I invite the representatives of Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras and Peru to take the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Casco (Nicaragua) took a place at the Council table; Mr. Peñalosa (Colombia), Mr. Gutierrez (Costa Rica), Mr. Hernandez Alcerro (Honduras) and Mr. Alzamora (Peru) took the places reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Viet Nam and Zimbabwe in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided,

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Nguyen Binh Thanh (Viet Nam and Mr. Mudenge (Zimbabwe) took the places reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The PRESIDENT: The Security Council will now resume its consideration of the item on the agenda.

I should like to draw the attention of members of the Council to the following documents: S/19656, letter dated 18 March 1988 from the Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General; S/19660 and S/19661, letters dated 21 March 1988 from the Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Permanent Mission of Nicaragua to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General; and S/19663, letter dated 21 March 1988 from the representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General.

The first speaker is the representative of Zimbabwe. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. MUDENGE (Zimbabwe): My delegation had occasion to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March earlier in the month, during the debate on the question of South Africa. I pointed out then that we were greatly pleased that the representative of a friendly country such as yours was presiding over the Council at such an important time. The confidence we expressed in your presidency then has been more than justified by the way you have guided the Council in dealing with the busy schedule that has attended your tenure of that high office.

The crisis in Central America is not new. It has exercised the efforts of the international community for a considerable time now. The General Assembly has adopted numerous resolutions on it. The Non-Aligned Movement has issued statements of principle on it; appealed to those with the wherewithal to influence events in the region in a beneficent way to do so; and dispatched missions to the region to explore possible paths towards peace. The Security Council itself has on numerous

(Mr. Mudenge, Zimbabwe)

occasions discussed the Central American crisis in debates in which my delegation has had the honour to participate. This range of activity reflects the concern of the international community over the conflict in Central America.

The non-aligned countries have sought to identify the underlying causes of the conflict. They have eschewed easy categorizations, such as that which would see the conflict as the result of the ideological confrontation between opposed Power-blocs in a bi-polar world. They saw such a categorization as too simplistic and paternalistic. It denies the Central American people their humanity, their capacity to choose for themselves their own destiny. It treats the Central American people as objects rather than subjects: objects to be manipulated by any outsider with the mind to do so. Convinced that this was erroneous, the non-aligned countries sought to find the deeper causes for the crisis - the real reasons. These were not difficult to find. At their Eighth Summit Conference in Harare, in 1986, the Heads of State or Government of the non-aligned countries correctly stated that

"the process of change in Central America is of a socio-economic nature and therefore could not be explained in terms of ideological confrontation between the military blocs". (S/18392, annex, Political Declaration, para. 224)

There, in a nutshell, is the heart of the problem. There too is the solution to be found - not in seeing chimeras of ideological adversaries behind each Central American bush, but in recognizing the vibrant pulse of the Central American people's quest for freedom. It is a clear manifestation of the Central American people's wish to concretize their inalienable right to choose their political, economic and social systems free from outside interference. Failure to realize that fact is to indulge in self-delusion.

(Mr. Mudenge, Zimbabwe)

To that end, fair-minded people everywhere have consistently sought to support authentic indigenous initiatives for solving regional problems. For that reason, the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement have lauded the emergence of a common Latin American consciousness of the need to find solutions to the grave political and economic problems of the region, in particular the Central American conflict. They supported the process of Contadora from its very inception earlier this decade. They stressed their conviction that the process represented an authentic regional initiative for solving the Central American problem by peaceful means, and urged all States concerned to increase their efforts in order to bring the peace process spearheaded by the Contadora Group to fruition.

The obstacles placed in the way of Contadora caused anguish in the hearts of all peace-loving peoples. Contadora represented the best game in town, but it appeared some important parties would not let it be played. And, as it remained stalled, thousands in Central America perished, billions in much-needed resources continued to be squandered, and human suffering continued apace.

Then came the Esquipulas II accords. That was a landmark document. The accords called for amnesty and dialogue in countries where there are armed struggles. There was to be an immediate cease-fire, a process of democratization, and elections. The five countries committed themselves to preventing the use of their territories to destabilize the region's Governments. The five States also requested the suspension of aid to the region's insurgents and irregular forces. But the importance of the Arias plan - as it has sometimes been called - went beyond merely these physical arrangements. It was not only a statement of what the five States were willing to do for the cause of peace in their region. It was also an assertion of the will of Central America to wrest control of its destiny

(Mr. Mudenge, Zimbabwe)

from the hands of outsiders. It was a call on the international community and all men of goodwill to give peace a chance in Central America.

The effect of the Esquipulas II accords in Central America itself was stunning, both at the level of Governments and at the level of the general populace. I had the occasion and the honour to visit the region during that time. I believe that the following report from Las Manos, Honduras, filed in The New York Times on 28 September 1987 by Mr. Lindsay Gruson best captures the mood of the region at the time:

(Mr. Mudenge, Zimbabwe)

"In the largest of the hopes unleashed by the recent regional peace agreement, thousands of Nicaraguans crossed the border here today to be reunited with family members who had fled a decade of war.

"It's beautiful, beautiful", said Sophia Flores Mendoza, tears rolling down her wide cheeks, as she hugged her daughter-in-law for the first time in eight years. 'If only it could be like this every day'."

It was a cry from the heart, a cry for peace. These are the sentiments of ordinary people; the sentiments of the real victims of the tragedy that afflicts Central America - not those of some geo-political strategists thousands of miles away, working with maps and figures, for whom a few hundred dead or missing are a mere statistic. It behoves the world to listen. This Council can ensure for Sophia Flores Mendoza that "it could be like this every day".

At the level of Governments, too, the effect of the Esquipulas II accords was profound. All the Governments of the region tried with varying success to comply with the provisions of the accords. In this enterprise, Nicaragua, aware that it was in the limelight, moved even further than the rest: Exiles were allowed to return. Borders with Honduras and Costa Rica were reopened. An amnesty was declared. A cease-fire was promulgated and, when the Contras refused to comply with that cease-fire at this initial phase, the Nicaraguan Government expressed its readiness to meet them across a negotiating table to work out the mechanics of such a cease-fire. Not only was the National Reconciliation Commission called for by the Guatemala Accords established, but at its head was put one of the most vocal critics of the Nicaraguan Government, Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo. The Roman Catholic radio station, always critical of the Nicaraguan Government, was allowed to go back on the air. The opposition newspaper, La Prensa, was allowed to resume publishing even as its publisher publicly stated that he intended to defy the

(Mr. Mudenge, Zimbabwe)

Government and had informed them so. The Christian Science Monitor, in conjunction with other major newspapers in the United States, was to say that the Nicaraguan Government had gone further than any other Government in the region to comply with the requirements of the Esquipulas II accords.

In the meantime, the author of those accords, President Arias of Costa Rica, continued to appeal to outsiders to heed the request of the accords that aid to the region's insurgents and irregular forces be suspended so as to give the peace plan a chance. In line with that appeal, the United States Congress refused to renew aid to the Contras this year. We know that the gesture was lauded by all peace-loving people everywhere. Then, soon after that, we were informed that the United States was dispatching over 3,000 troops to Honduras because of cross-border raids in the region.

What are we to make of this? The President of the United States informed us that the troops of the 82nd Airborne Division were not in Central America to fight. If they are not to fight, then what are they in Central America for? At their eighth summit in Harare in 1986, the leaders of the non-aligned countries "observed that the danger of direct United States intervention in Nicaragua and other countries in the region had increased alarmingly". It would appear to us that the trade of all soldiers is fighting. If the soldiers were sent to Central America only to send a message, what is that message if not that the United States is prepared to fight? Or is it, as Senator Christopher Dodd stated on the ABC News Programme "This Week", that the United States Administration is trying to jump-start the request for additional aid for the Contras that was rejected by Congress?

This is the realm of conjecture. The real meaning of this gesture on the part of the United States Administration will be seen in the fullness of time. One

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thing, however, is clear even now: The cause of peace in Central America is not served by saber rattling. Not only do these manoeuvres fly in the face of the Guatemala Accords, but they also bring in a dangerous new element to an already complex situation.

For our part, we fervently support the peace plan worked out between the Central American Governments and strongly appeal to all to do nothing that would impede the realization of the goals of that plan. In line with that aim, we regret the introduction of troops to Central America that are foreign to the region and appeal to the United States to recall them. Only in that way can peace be given a chance in Central America. We appeal to the fraternal countries of Nicaragua and Honduras to do nothing to undermine the peace process.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Zimbabwe and Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement for his very kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Colombia. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. PEÑALOSA (Colombia) (interpretation from Spanish): Mr. President, I should like first to offer our gratitude for this opportunity to address the Council once again. Today I should like to read out the communiqué issued last Friday, 18 March, in New York, by the member countries of the Contadora Group, Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela, and the countries of the Support Group, Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Uruguay. The communiqué reads as follows:

"The countries members of the Contadora Group and the Support Group,

"1. Express their profound concern at the escalation of the foreign military presence in the territory of the Republic of Honduras.

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

"2. Reiterate the need for strict compliance with the fundamental principles of non-intervention, prohibition of the threat or use of force, and peaceful settlement of disputes.

"3. Issue a fraternal and urgent appeal to the Governments of Honduras and Nicaragua to reduce the tension in their border area immediately and to guarantee respect for each other's territorial integrity and the non-use of their territories as a base for aggression against another State, in accordance with the commitments entered into under the Esquipulas II agreement.

"4. Issue an appeal for the halting and immediate reversal of the escalation of the foreign military presence in the territory of the Republic of Honduras and in Central America, as well as for the termination of all aid to irregular forces and insurrectionist movements operating in the area. They likewise reiterate that dialogue and direct negotiation are the only lawful means for solving the region's problems.

"5. Urge all parties involved to exercise the utmost restraint and refrain from any action which might aggravate the conflict and jeopardize the Central American peace process:

"6. Urge the Secretary-General of the United Nations to arrange for the immediate dispatch of an observer mission and to contribute, by all means at his disposal, to the restoration of peace." (A/42/936, p. 2)

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

We wish to say how pleased we are that the Secretary-General has already proceeded to send the observer mission requested here. We are also pleased that the talks that started yesterday between representatives of the Government of Nicaragua and the irregular forces operating there have proceeded in an atmosphere of great cordiality and optimism. We hope that these signs will be perceived by all parties interested in the area.

Mr. DJOUDI (Algeria) (interpretation from French): The delegations of Argentina, Nepal, Senegal, Yugoslavia and Zambia have honoured me by asking me to make a statement on their behalf, as well as on behalf of my own delegation. The unusual nature of this move only serves to emphasize further the gravity of our concern.

The sharp worsening of the situation in Central America is legitimate cause for heightened concern for the peoples of the region and, indeed, for the whole international community.

The new and dangerous developments which have occurred in the last few days have taken place against a background of a process which, although arduous, had shown great promise for the lasting restoration of peace in the region. The military escalation which has occurred truly marks a perilous disruption in the pursuit of a venture which had promoted sustained dialogue and negotiation as the exclusive and irreplaceable means for restoring trust, leading to a return to regional understanding and co-operation. That escalation has also served to disrupt what had so far been a strictly regional process, thanks to the efforts of the Contadora and Support Groups and the Central American countries themselves following up on the Esquipulas II Agreements, a process that, in order to fulfil its promise, presupposed the absence of any foreign interference or intervention, if not the active encouragement, of Powers outside the region.

(Mr. Djoudi, Algeria)

It is in our opinion of the highest importance that the chance for peace be preserved in accordance with the heartfelt wishes of the peoples concerned, with due respect for their rights to self-determination and independence and for their freely chosen ideas as regards their common future.

In expressing our grave concern over the deliberate worsening of developments in Central America we wish to appeal for the survival and triumph of the spirit of Contadora and to express the hope that the letter and spirit of the Esquipulas II Agreements, the symbol of regional solidarity, will prevail against all odds.

In this respect, the statement just made by Ambassador Peñalosa of Colombia on behalf of the countries members of the Contadora and Support Groups suggesting ways of de-escalating tension and guiding efforts at achieving peace back onto the path laid out by the Esquipulas II Agreements, by its comprehensive nature and timeliness constitutes the proper reaction to the current situation in Central America.

We therefore welcome the reassuring stands that followed that statement which, already indicating a return to moderation and restraint, are thus likely to foster dialogue and negotiation in the context of strict compliance with the commitments entered into by the five Central American countries.

At a time when the great Powers are increasingly inclined to see the need for definitive settlements of regional conflicts, it is indeed important for them to promote the advent of such settlements by moving with realism in full awareness of the elements of which those conflicts are genuinely composed, but at the same time precluding any artificially introduced dimension, with due respect for all the rights of the peoples concerned and sincere encouragement for regional initiatives and regional framework, as well as for the efforts made by the United Nations.

(Mr. Djoudi, Algeria)

In this context we trust that the mission of inquiry sent to the region by the Secretary-General will prove capable of establishing the facts and help to de-escalate tension.

The PRESIDENT: The next speaker is the representative of Honduras. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. HERNANDEZ ALCERRO (Honduras) (interpretation from Spanish): The delegation of Honduras has listened carefully to the statement made by the delegations of the countries members of the Contadora Group and the Support Group, as well as to the other representatives who spoke.

The Government of Honduras would like to state on this occasion that it is not only the right but also the duty of every State to provide for its national defence. No country exercising that right in the case of aggression can be accused of failing to abide by its international obligations.

Quite the contrary, a State using force and crossing neighbouring borders to carry out military operations deserves not only the concern but also the condemnation of the international community. It appears to be necessary to recall this here, because it seems that today the world is confused and that even principles as widely recognized as this one have been distorted.

I do not wish to repeat what I said in the Council last Friday. I merely wish to point out that it is paradoxical that concern has been expressed over the result while omitting reference to the cause.

As everyone knows, Honduras has been the victim of aggression. Faced with an enemy which has forces seven times greater than ours and which only in the last two months has received nearly 3,000 tons of arms, munitions and equipment, the Government of Honduras, exercising its sovereign right, called on the United States for effective and immediate assistance to enable it to strengthen its international position of security before an ongoing act of aggression.

(Mr. Hernandez Alcerro, Honduras)

The only escalation of foreign military presence in Honduran territory that is of concern to us and that should be of concern is that of the troops of the Sandinist People's Army that invaded Honduras.

My delegation believes that the concern expressed is not with regard to the decision by Honduras to exercise its right to self-defence.

There are certain aspects of the statement we have just heard from the Contadora and Support Groups that my delegation believes should be emphasized. We should like to emphasize, in particular, the appeal that has been made for respect for territorial integrity - we assume that of Honduras - which has been repeatedly violated by Nicaraguan troops and airplanes. This must be emphasized because if there is no vigorous appeal for the territorial integrity of my country we would be ignoring one of the essential principles that guarantee peace among nations and the true origin of the present tense situation in the region.

Similarly, my delegation has noted that an appeal has been made to the Government of Nicaragua to respect the principle banning the threat or use of force, which is tantamount to requiring the withdrawal of its troops not only from Honduran territory but also from the areas bordering on Honduras.

My delegation also notes that when reiterating those principles concerning the peaceful settlement of disputes an appeal was also made to Nicaragua to place its own action within that framework and in particular that it use the institutional machinery that has been set up by the Central American Presidents in their proposal to overcome the regional crisis. Honduras is pleased at statements here that dialogue and direct negotiations are the sole, legitimate means to resolve the problems in the region.

My Government has always maintained that peace cannot be achieved in Nicaragua through the physical elimination of armed political opposition. An end to internal

(Mr. Hernandez Alcerro, Honduras)

conflicts, such as the one prevailing in Nicaragua, is necessary to reach regional peace. Such was the understanding of the Central American Presidents when they committed themselves to action aimed at bringing about an effective cessation of hostilities.

As the Honduran Secretary for Foreign Affairs stated in the general debate at the forty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly:

"An essential part of Esquipulas II is an appeal for the cessation of hostilities. Those Governments of the States that are at present the victims of activities carried out by irregular or insurgent groups have committed themselves to whatever action is necessary to implement a cease-fire within a constitutional framework.

"An effective cease-fire is essential for the attainment of peace in those countries suffering from civil war. Once the hostilities are over citizens will, as an inevitable result of socio-political realities, return to normal civil life and take an active part in the democratization of their countries.

"Once the hostilities are over, refugees will return to their countries of origin and their homes and give their families the fruit of the work and the quiet home life that is the cement required to build national tranquillity. Once the hostilities are over, the tensions among neighbouring countries produced by such refugee movements will come to an end. Once the hostilities are over, there will no longer be any need for external assistance provided for the purpose of destabilizing Governments." (A/42/PV.24, p. 21)

Peace in Central America depends on a series of complex and interrelated factors, the Gordian knot of which is internal peace in those countries where there are armed conflicts and deep social divisions.

(Mr. Hernandez Alcerro, Honduras)

Like any peace intended to be stable and durable, it cannot be imposed by force of arms. The peoples of Central America are not calling for a peace of the graves. The peoples of Central America want the kind of peace that will enable them to live in freedom with justice, a peace in which they will be allowed to dissent, to express themselves, to organize and to participate.

Appeals for peace that disregard those realities conceal motives that cannot be admitted or that disregard the will of the Central American peoples.

The Government of Honduras, for its part, believes that the moderation that has been called for has indeed been exercised at all times. We have used direct contacts with the Government of Nicaragua; we have used regional diplomatic channels; we have avoided a direct confrontation with the troops invading Honduras; our military response has thus far been limited and the international assistance we are requesting is basically deterrent in nature. Honduras cannot be blamed for jeopardizing the peace process in Central America, nor can it be blamed for having aggravated the tense situation in the region.

Regarding the sending of an observer mission, the Government of Honduras has already stated that it does not believe such a step is necessary, since there is already a mechanism set up by the Central American Presidents, the Executive Committee, which is entrusted with promoting and making viable procedures for establishing a firm and lasting peace in Central America, namely, the Esquipulas II Agreements.

Honduras cannot renounce the mandate the five Presidents of Central America have agreed to give to their respective Foreign Ministers just to satisfy the unilateral interests of Nicaragua. To accede to Nicaragua's request at the present time would, in the opinion of Honduras, go against the political will expressed by the leaders in Alajuela, Costa Rica, on 16 January of this year.

(Mr. Hernandez Alcerro, Honduras)

As a matter of fact, tomorrow, 23 March, in Guatemala City, there will be a meeting of the Executive Committee made up of the Central American Foreign Ministers. There, Central Americans themselves will make an analysis of the present situation. I have been informed that that meeting will consider the situation in the border region between Honduras and Nicaragua as well as the reports of the respective Commissions for National Reconciliation, a Nicaraguan proposal regarding verification follow-up, a proposal by Honduras for the creation of international security machinery along the Honduras-Nicaragua-El Salvador border and reports on the status of refugees and the homeless in the Central American region. It is to be hoped that at that meeting the Government of Nicaragua will reiterate its commitment to the Equipulas II Agreements, and especially its international obligation not to commit aggression against neighbouring countries and to endeavour to achieve internal reconciliation.

The PRESIDENT: The next speaker is the representative of Nicaragua, on whom I now call.

Ms. CASCO (Nicaragua) (interpretation from Spanish): Allow me first to express the deep thanks of my Government to the Secretary-General for the prompt and thorough manner in which he responded to our request to send a technical mission to investigate on site the recent border incidents in the area of Bocay, on Nicaraguan territory, between the Reagan mercenary forces and soldiers of the Sandinista People's Army. Following its investigation, the mission is to make specific recommendations aimed at eliminating the causes of such incidents.

We also wish to express our appreciation to the members of the Council for having made possible the Secretary-General's action and initiative.

Events since the United States Government denounced an alleged invasion of Honduran territory by Nicaraguan troops have only confirmed what we said in the Council last Friday, that the whole situation is nothing more than an artificial crisis created by the United States Government to justify sending United States troops to Honduras and thus save its mercenary forces from a complete military defeat, set the stage for possible direct military action against Nicaragua and obtain further funds to continue its war against my country.

Recent events have made that perfectly clear. At first the United States Administration declared that its troops would be confined to carrying out military exercises with the Honduran army in Central Honduras, 120 miles from the Nicaraguan border. Then it announced that those troops had been moved to locations 60 miles from the border, and now it turns out that they are 15 miles from Nicaraguan soil, in disregard of the supposed prohibition on United States troops permanently stationed in Honduras going nearer than 20 miles from the Nicaraguan border.

(Ms. Casco, Nicaragua)

All of that shows that the danger has not passed; on the contrary, it is growing. The manner in which the Honduran Government has gone along with United States plans to provoke a Central American Gulf of Tonkin incident, which would serve as a pretext for a direct invasion, and the escalation of intimidation, threats, violations of airspace and bombing of Nicaraguan territory point to the possibility of imminent large-scale imperialist military action. That is clear from the declarations of the Foreign Minister of Honduras to the effect that Washington has given a commitment that its troops would go into combat if the Government of Honduras so requested. That is a very serious matter, since history - particularly recent events - has shown once again that it is the United States that decides what the Government of Honduras should request of it.

When the Esquipulas II Agreement was signed the President of Honduras, Jose Azcona Hoyo, asked the President of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, to postpone the public hearings in Nicaragua's case before the International Court of Justice until the second summit conference of Central American leaders, which was to take place in San Jose, Costa Rica, 150 days after the signing of the Esquipulas II Agreement. In return, the President of Honduras agreed to take the necessary action to dismantle the communication centres, radio stations and logistic bases maintained by the Reagan Administration's mercenary forces in his country.

In an attempt to create a climate favourable to the implementation of the peace agreements, the President of Nicaragua complied with the request of the President of Honduras, and my Government asked the World Court to postpone the public hearings until 15 January this year.

That commitment lapsed two months ago; yet the Government of Honduras has not only taken no steps to do what it agreed to do, but, rather, has continued to allow its territory to be used with impunity for the launching of military and

(Ms. Casco, Nicaragua)

paramilitary operations against Nicaragua. It has also rejected any type of on-site inspection, either by the international Verification and Control Commission or by a United Nations body, such as that which the Secretary-General has decided to send to Nicaragua, at the request of my Government.

In the face of the repeated, unwarranted attacks, whose purpose is to provoke my Government, and of the Honduran army's complicity and active participation in the bombings and acts of aggression promoted by the Government of the United States; and taking seriously into consideration the threats of the President of Honduras to carry out further bombings and to seek more American support, as well as the readiness of the United States Government to "honour" any request made to it by the Government of Honduras, as the Secretary of State, George Shultz, put it recently, my Government has instructed our agent at the International Court of Justice at The Hague immediately to resubmit our case against the Republic of Honduras and to request that the Court decide on interim protective measures in that case, which concerns border and cross-border military actions.

That decision is further proof of my Government's determination to seek peaceful solutions to situations threatening international peace, choosing the means for the settlement of disputes to which we are obliged to have recourse, under the United Nations Charter and the Bogota Pact.

We appeal to the Government of Honduras to heed the insistent calls of the Government of Nicaragua to accept the Secretary-General's mission, in an effort to defuse the tense situation into which the United States Government has pushed the Honduran Government in an attempt to justify its plans for aggression against Nicaragua. The Government of Honduras must understand that only the Reagan Administration wishes to prevent the artificial situation it has created between

(Ms. Casco, Nicaragua)

Honduras and Nicaragua, from being settled with the assistance of an impartial commission of experts, such as that sent to Nicaragua by the Secretary-General, whose findings would contribute to clarifying the facts behind the Reagan Administration's improper and disproportionate response.

(Ms. Casco, Nicaragua)

My Government knows full well that the Reagan Administration wants Nicaragua to use military force in response to its provocations, giving it the pretext it seeks for unleashing further intervention. But the Government of Nicaragua is firm in appealing for restraint and in its view that dialogue, not the use or threat of force, must be the source for the solution of problems.

Nicaragua, as a firm advocate of the Esquipulas Agreements, has worked hard for the past seven months to comply with them fully. Notwithstanding the present threat of invasion we are facing, we continue to defend the peace process and comply fully with our obligations under the Agreements.

It is in that spirit that the Government of Nicaragua is currently engaged in dialogue at the highest level with my country's opposition political parties and direct negotiations at the highest level with the contra leadership, aimed at achieving a cease-fire. With respect to national dialogue, yesterday eight opposition political parties came to agreement with the Government of Nicaragua, among other things, that

"In conformity with the Esquipulas II Agreements, the country's internal political affairs should be dealt with exclusively between the Government of the Republic of Nicaragua and the civil opposition political parties and groupings, in the framework of national dialogue. Questions relating to the cease-fire should be dealt with between the Government of the Republic of Nicaragua and armed rebel groups".

With respect to the current negotiations at Sapoa with the so-called contra leadership to reach a final cease-fire, the level of the Nicaraguan Government delegation is in keeping with our people's aspiration to peace. Our delegation has put forward a serious, viable proposal and is prepared to reach immediate agreements. Further proof of our genuine interest in the success of these talks is

(Ms. Casco, Nicaragua)

yesterday's unilateral announcement by my Government that it would suspend for 30 days all offensive military operations by the Sandinist People's Army upon agreement on a cease-fire, with a view to the reintegration of the irregular forces into our political life. If the delegation representing the United States Government in these talks - the contra representatives - has sufficient authority, the political will of the United States will face a test. It is up to the United States Government to commit itself to the hopes for peace held by Central America, and particularly by the people of Nicaragua.

But how has the United States Government responded to my Government's genuine interest in peace? Rather than contributing to this peace effort, as called for by the Esquipulas II Agreements, by halting all assistance to irregular forces, the President of the United States of America, Ronald Reagan, today went to the Capitol to exert direct pressure on the United States Congress to approve a package of funds to continue his terrorist policies against the people of Nicaragua. That runs counter to the peace efforts pursued by the Nicaraguans both in Managua and in Sapoá, and forms part of the belligerent interventionist escalation manifested by the recent deployment of United States troops in Honduras in an attempt to threaten Nicaragua's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

None the less, we continue to hope that at the end of his tenure in office, President Reagan will, upon reflection, come to realize that seven years of a failed policy of destruction and death against our people is more than enough to satisfy his obsession to eliminate the Nicaraguan revolution. The blood spilt by our people over these long years and the destruction wreaked upon our economy demand an immediate end to that obsession and the beginning of rational, responsible action in accordance with the rules and principles of international law

(Ms. Casco, Nicaragua)

governing peaceful coexistence among States: the kind of action proper for a world Power and permanent member of the Security Council.

My Government's unceasing displays of flexibility and readiness for dialogue are clear testimony to the desire for peace and justice that backs up our cause. We have paid a high price to protect our dignity, self-determination and sovereignty. On innumerable occasions we have offered the olive branch of peace, but in return we have received the weapons of war. We hope that the Government of the United States will finally come to respect the determination of Central American leaders and Latin American efforts to establish a just and lasting peace in our embattled region. The United States must not reject this historic opportunity to lay the foundation for more constructive, respectful relations with Latin America and the Caribbean.

We hope too that it will heed the clamour of its own people, who in recent days have spoken out publicly against its illegal and immoral policy in Nicaragua.

Mr. OKUN (United States of America): Despite the smokescreen thrown up today by the representative of Nicaragua, certain fundamental, incontrovertible facts must not be lost sight of when commenting upon the Sandinista incursion into the national territory of the Republic of Honduras. First, the Sandinista régime committed aggression against its neighbour, Honduras, not vice versa. Secondly, this was a clear, premeditated aggression. The incursion into Honduran national territory was not an accident, and it was not hot pursuit. In its 19 March 1988 edition, The New York Times, for example, reported that Lt.-Col. Javier Carrion, regional Sandinista commander, admitted that the offensive "had been planned since December". The Sandinista offensive launched against San Andres de Bocay was one of the largest military operations which the Sandinistas have ever mounted, and included the clear intention of entering Honduran national territory.

(Mr. Okun, United States)

Let me briefly review once again the facts, the incontrovertible facts, for the Council.

On 8 March President Ortega publicly hinted at the forthcoming offensive, when during a speech to party militants of the Sandinista Front for National Liberation he warned the resistance to "prepare itself for another heroic drive" by Sandinista forces. The actual preparations for the offensive have probably been under way at least since the middle of February, when evidence was obtained of a build-up of matériel by the Sandinista forces in the Las Minas area. In early March the Sandinistas began assembling troops in the area of Bonanza and Puerto Cabezas, requisitioning and transporting large quantities of fuel to resupply points, repositioning aircraft to the region and creating a command and control centre at Bonanza.

(Mr. Okun, United States)

By 17 March an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 Sandinista combat troops had crossed into Honduran territory.

The careful and massive preparations, combined with President Ortega's public warning, indicate that the offensive had one overriding strategic goal: the destruction of the Nicaraguan resistance as an effective fighting force. The offensive explains repeated Sandinista efforts over the past weeks to delay and obstruct successful cease-fire talks.

The attack was planned for months. It was implemented when the Sandinista leadership calculated that it could deliver a crippling blow against the resistance and when it anticipated that Honduran authorities would not react.

Why have Sandinista forces retreated back into Nicaragua without achieving their objective? There were three key factors which forced the Sandinistas to abandon this offensive: first, the Republic of Honduras reacted forcefully to the Sandinista violation of its territorial sovereignty. On 17 March, Honduran air force jets launched a counter-attack against Sandinista positions. This was repeated on 19 March. Secondly, the prompt deployment by the United States of more than 3,000 troops to Honduras, in response to a request from the Honduran Government, was a forceful demonstration of American resolve to assist the Republic of Honduras in defending its national territory. Thirdly, the Sandinistas underestimated the resistance. Trained and equipped for small unit insurgent operations, they successfully turned back the concerted Sandinista ground and air attack.

I listened with interest to the Declaration read by the Permanent Representative of Colombia on behalf of the members of Contadora and the Support Group. I have a number of questions and comments concerning that Declaration. Are the members of Contadora and the Support Group, in their carefully chosen words,

(Mr. Okun, United States)

referring solely to the presence of United States troops in Honduras, who are there as a result of the invitation of the Honduran Government, or do the drafters of this statement intend to condemn, as they properly should, Nicaraguan actions?

In reviewing the statement I note that not once does the document clearly identify and condemn the Sandinista régime as the aggressor. The Republic of Honduras did not create tension in the area by its legitimate defensive steps. Nicaragua bears the responsibility for violating the territorial integrity of Honduras. Let us urge moderation and restraint where moderation and restraint are needed. It was the Sandinista leadership which responded to the acceptance of cease-fire talks by the Nicaraguan resistance on 10 March by cynically invading Honduran territory in force five days later.

Finally, I wish to comment on the Nicaraguan request for an observer mission. The United States has serious doubts about what a United Nations fact-finding mission can accomplish. Verification is a matter which the Central American Governments have explicitly taken into their own hands in the Central American peace process, as the representative of Honduras pointed out to us a few moments ago. The region's Foreign Ministers, acting as the executive commission for the Guatemala Agreement, are scheduled to meet on 23 March. That body has been designated in the Guatamala Accord as the final authority for verification. If there is a role for an international organization in this particular matter, then it falls more appropriately to the Organization of American States, the regional organization directly responsible. It is our understanding that the Secretary-General of the OAS has decided not to participate in sending such an observer team.

(Mr. Okun, United States)

Permit me to sum up by concluding with four basic points: first, the United States fully supports the principles of the Guatemala Accord; secondly, stability will return to Central America when the Sandinista régime is finally prepared to live up to the solemn commitments it made in Guatemala on 7 August 1987; thirdly, stability and peace will return to Central America when Nicaragua implements a genuine dialogue and initiates an authentic reconciliation process with the civic opposition and the Nicaraguan resistance; fourthly, stability and peace will return to Central America when Nicaragua no longer asserts its self-appointed right to subvert the neighbouring democracies and to launch premeditated attacks on their territories.

The PRESIDENT: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The next meeting of the Security Council to continue the consideration of the item on the agenda will be fixed in consultations with members of the Council.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.