

United Nations

Press Release

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SECRETARY-GENERAL'S STATEMENT TO ARGENTINE COUNCIL FOR FOREIGN RELATIONS

The following is the statement of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali delivered on Monday, 14 March, in Buenos Aires to the Argentine Council for Foreign Relations:

It gives me great pleasure to be here in this splendid capital city of Buenos Aires, among friends, addressing the Council for Foreign Relations of Argentina. This is the second time for me that I have the pleasure and the honour of being among you. The first time was in 1981. I represented President Sadat and requested the participation of Argentina in the multinational forces in Sinai. This time, I am here as Secretary-General of the United Nations, and I want to assure you that I am not coming to ask for military units from Argentina, because you have already been most generous.

The contribution which a Member State makes to the Organization is not dependent on its military power. The size of its population, or the strength of its economy, does not shape the support which a State gives to the United Nations. It is a matter of commitment. Much depends on the political will of the leaders of a Member State. Some States are active in the Organization, some are not. Some large States have, traditionally, stood aloof.

That is not the case in your country. Here, the value of multilateralism is well understood. Argentina, a founder Member of the United Nations, has demonstrated a strong commitment to the Organization. Argentina is a member of the Security Council. Argentina takes its responsibilities seriously, both towards the international community and in regional forums.

Argentina has been instrumental in international efforts to maintain Latin America as a nuclear-free zone, and to control arms production in the region.

Peace-keeping personnel from Argentina are currently serving in no fewer than eight United Nations peace operations. You have established, in this city, a regional training centre for United Nations peace-keeping operations.

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The first course will take place in July. At the centre, troops from Argentina and from other Latin American countries will train for United Nations peace-keeping operations around the world.

Your President has put forward new ideas for new forms of international mobilization against hunger. His proposal is for an international volunteer force of cascos blancos. It is clear that Governments cannot do everything; there are energies and capacities among individuals, in communities and in the private sector which can and should be mobilized. President Carlos Saúl Menem's proposals are receiving serious consideration at the United Nations and among Member States.

The support of Argentina for the United Nations, its commitment to the international community, has not happened in a vacuum. The international commitment of Argentina, its multilateralist vocation, are reflections of a deeper reality. They reflect new political approaches at home.

You are consolidating your democracy. You are restoring respect for human rights. Market-led economic growth is leading your economic and social development.

Great efforts have been made to bring about a true political reconciliation in this country. You are re-establishing the legitimacy of your democratic political institutions.

The cold war having ended, Argentina was quick to seize the new opportunities. No visitor can fail to note that this is a country with formidable assets, including the talents of its people and the richness of its land. Your nation is also redefining its regional and international relationships.

This is, therefore, a good place and time for me to take stock of the current state of international cooperation; to describe how the post-cold war world is taking shape and to attempt to chart the way ahead.

The United Nations exists to carry out common world commitments. It is an indispensable mechanism for human betterment. States have always defined their national interests. But if conflict is to be avoided, States must recognize that other States also have national interests. They must be prepared to make mutual concessions.

Today, States must be prepared to accommodate the concept of a common -- global or planetary -- interest. The United Nations is the expression of that common interest.

The cold war shaped international relations for four decades. No country was spared its impact. Here in Argentina, its negative polarizing effects were felt in your national community.

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The cold war also gave a degree of predictability to world affairs. That is no more. Today's world is unusually complex. It is far less intelligible than yesterday's world.

It is only four years since the cold war ended. Yet already we have passed through several distinct stages.

There was, first, the time of hope. The nations and peoples of the world expressed a desire to fulfil the purpose of the Charter of the United Nations: a United Nations capable of maintaining international peace and security, of securing justice and human rights, and of promoting "social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

Then there was a time of commitment to international cooperation. Great intellectual energy was released. New solutions were sought in a spirit of optimism and cooperation.

Then came a time of engagement. The United Nations became more active than ever in its history. The Member States increased their demands on the world Organization.

Just in 1993, for example:

-- The Security Council met 171 times. That surpassed the record of all the meetings during the last 48 years.

-- Five new peace-keeping missions were set up: Haiti, Georgia, Liberia and two in Rwanda. In the last few years, the United Nations has set up more peace operations than in its first 40 years.

-- In the process, the very nature of peace-keeping has changed. In some cases, the relatively passive presence of peace-keepers has, by necessity, become proactive and comprehensive. Peace-keeping now also involves protecting civilians and rebuilding shattered societies -- after wars have ended.

-- These demands meant that, by the end of 1993, over 70,000 military and civilian personnel, from 70 Member States, were serving around the world under the United Nations flag.

-- The United Nations has also become the major provider and coordinator of humanitarian assistance around the world.

-- With the end of the super-Power competition in the third world, the work of development is in crisis. Great Powers no longer fund needy countries to gain cold war allies. While the end of militarism is welcome, the loss of commitment to, and interest in, the development of poor countries, is not.

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-- Along a new range of global issues, the environment, population and migration, health, international legal and commercial issues, the situation of women and children, the responsibilities of the United Nations grow greater every day.

The United Nations, by undertaking a range of problems as wide as the globe itself, must be expected to experience setbacks, as well as to achieve successes. The setbacks cannot be put to one side; they require continuing commitment. And successes cannot be regarded as permanent. Every positive outcome is likely to require further effort.

The challenge today, therefore, is twofold. First, we have to make the world more intelligible. We need a clearer view of where we are going. Member States must agree on a diagnosis of the forces shaping international society. The world then has to define more precisely the scope and limits of collective international action.

Second, just as nations define their national interest, so a new definition, or compact, is needed, to define the common interest. All nations should realize that we share an interest in peace, security, development and democracy.

In the past, much energy and creativity was directed to the creation of rival armed camps. Today, in many parts of the world, great efforts are expended on wars against those of different ethnic, racial or religious backgrounds. Those efforts, those energies must now be redirected, and put to work for our common interest as members of a shared international community.

Nations which saw those of opposing ideologies as evil must now focus on the real evils: poverty, starvation, disease and pollution, the absence of democracy, infringements of human rights.

But the obstacles to a greater clarity, understanding and commitment in international affairs are already becoming clear. If the Member States can deal with these issues, the United Nations can turn towards greater global unity, justice and success. If these contradictions remain unresolved, we can expect to descend into ever-deepening troubles and, ultimately, chaos.

Let me review the problems we now face.

There is, first, a systemic contradiction in world affairs. After the Napoleonic wars, the Congress of Vienna convened. After the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles was signed. After the Second World War, the United Nations Charter was created at San Francisco. That unifying vision was then supplanted by the super-Power struggle.

The cold war bipolar system has now disappeared. No new system has taken its place. And no world conference can be expected to set such a course at this time.

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Thus, at a time of unprecedented global interaction, no new consensus for an international system has yet appeared.

Second is a structural contradiction.

The United Nations is the world Organization of sovereign States. But the time of fundamental and absolute sovereignty has passed. Commerce, communication, disasters such as famine, and environmental threats transcend State borders. Sometimes they are immune from State control. Solutions, therefore, have to be international.

In many cases, States have voluntarily given aspects of their sovereignty to supranational bodies or external multilateral groups.

In other cases, the sovereignty and cohesion of States have been weakened by ethnic, religious, social, cultural or linguistic claims.

So, the foundation stone of international order and progress the State is, both by design and involuntarily, being transformed. But no alternative to the State is in sight.

Third is a psychological contradiction.

Modernization has swept away much local, traditional and communal life. At the same time, impersonal forces of globalization are felt everywhere. This has created an overwhelming sense of insecurity. This, in turn, has led to a need to identify with a larger entity, to give inchoate experience new meaning.

As a result, tribalism, nationalism, protectionism and fundamentalism increasingly appeal to the alienated individual.

This creates another contradiction. People need something to mediate between themselves and the outside world. As they search for such support, they often are driven towards groups which look inward. Often, such groups seek to defy the wider world of change. Sometimes they repudiate the very values on which a world of peace and development can be built.

Fourth is the political-military contradiction.

In the cold war era, every conflict was deemed important. Today, some States see little reason for concern unless their own national security is threatened directly. They are deeply reluctant to use military force. They call upon diplomacy to resolve disputes.

But just as strength without diplomacy is self-defeating, diplomacy without strength is fruitless. It is clear that the international community cannot step in to try to solve every crisis. But if it turns its back too often, before long we will face a world of widening conflict and chaos.

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Thus, the political-military means of achieving security are at present not working in tandem. The world once saw international peace and security as a web of connected concerns. Today, it lacks consensus on what kind of conflict is significant to the maintenance of international peace and security

Fifth is the crisis and contradiction of development.

Although the concept of development implies progress, it is now clear that it is not easy or automatic. While some States have been successful, more have remained stagnant, showing little or no progress at all. Worse still, war and conflict have pushed many States backward on the path of development.

With the end of the cold war, the failure of centrally-planned regimes made it clear that market forces are indispensable to economic prosperity. But the complexity of economic, social, political and environmental factors has not permitted a new consensus on development to arise. Old solutions have been revealed as inadequate, but new approaches have not won full acceptance.

The contradiction of development has several dimensions. A coherent and integrative approach is needed. But the capacity of Governments to affect economic events, and to apply effective social policies, has eroded. At a time when they are most needed, financial international institutions also affect smaller and smaller parts of the global picture.

While a more realistic understanding of the sources of growth has been achieved, the numbers of the poorest peoples of the world are growing.

This is a sure recipe for social discord. Economic growth without social improvement in the lives of the poor majority in the world will not bring lasting, sustainable, development.

Sixth is the contradiction in communication.

This is the age of information. Information is available instantly, in vast quantity, to every part of the globe. The sheer volume of material gives the media a crucial role. What they focus on, and what meaning they provide, has vast significance to the course of world events.

Today, those events are distorted in three ways: geographically, substantively and functionally. Where two conflicts are equally severe, the world learns more of one than the other when the national forces of the major media are involved there. Even when one upheaval is vastly more severe than a second, the second may be considered more significant if the reporting media feel their culture's interests are more profoundly affected. And political or military events which lend themselves to dramatic images are sure to be reported, while slow-moving changes of vastly greater significance over time, such as economic or social development, get little or no attention at all.

Thus, the contradiction between information and knowledge distorts our understanding of world events. We have too much information. But we lack the

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analysis, perspective and ordering of events that could contribute to understanding and reasoned action.

Seventh are the ways in which these global contradictions affect, and can be resolved through, the United Nations.

The United Nations is the world Organization. As such, it provides a foundation for the new international system now needed.

The United Nations is the instrument of its Member States.

This is a fundamental point. We live in a world of new contradictions and little broad agreement. The security and prosperity of States will not be realized if there is a return to narrow nationalism. They can be secured only in multilateralism.

But the world must will the means, too. The financial commitments of the United Nations in peace-keeping alone have risen from \$455 million to over \$3 billion in the past four years. Yet, as of today, all available financial reserves for peace-keeping have been exhausted. At the end of 1993, the outstanding assessed contributions from Member States for peace-keeping totalled \$1 billion. Even with the contributions received in February, I am advised that funds will be exhausted by April.

So, the United Nations is facing a financial crisis, as well as the other, structural, crises in the international system. Member States are beginning to see the United Nations, not as the enemy of their national sovereignty, but as its most intelligent expression. But very few Member States are paying their agreed assessed contributions in full or on time.

This may seem like a long list of crises and dangers. But I am glad to be able to tell you that, despite all current difficulties and uncertainties, the outlook is positive.

The United Nations Charter possesses a legitimacy, and a universality, which is unique. That legitimacy, and that universality, endow the United Nations with a very special moral authority and capacity for international action.

The acts of the United Nations carry the authority of nations of the world, acting in concert. Its values are derived, not from the irreducible minimum of political consensus in the world, but from the common values of humanity: the values of peace and security, economic and social equity, and democracy and human rights. Those are the values of the Charter. They are what unite us as Members of the United Nations.

Of course, the United Nations cannot, and should not, try to do everything. But by expressing the values of the Charter and drawing on its unique legitimacy, with the right kind of understanding and support, the United Nations, like Archimedes, can move the world in the right direction with a relatively small use of strength. Our troubled world needs such a

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helping nudge more than ever. With the support of Member States such as Argentina, we can and should provide it.

My message today is that the extraordinary opportunities of this moment in history require an extraordinary response. Member States must take on a new responsibility. They should see the United Nations as the projection of their united will, not as something separate and apart. The political will and authority which accompany the passage of United Nations resolutions must also be applied to their implementation.

The tasks of the world Organization must be seen through to their end. It is not enough simply to support resolutions. Mandates and missions must be backed by the financial and material means to do the job. Otherwise, our promises and our shared hopes will prove empty.

We are approaching the end of a century which has been correctly described as the most bloody and hateful in history. More than 100 million have been killed in wars, confrontations, and man-made famines and other disasters. We cannot escape the duty to learn and grow beyond this to realize a greater and more human vision.

Painfully, and with difficulty, the realization is dawning that, for millions of individual human beings across the world, in every country and of every background, the United Nations is more than an instrument of peace and cooperation among nations. It is the repository of hope for humanity.

It is still not too late to create a new United Nations for a new international era. As the new century approaches, we must provide an agenda of hope for a world that is struggling to find its way. The time is now for the United Nations of the future.

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