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THE SITUATION IN KAMPUCHEA

QUESTION OF PEACE, STABILITY AND CO-OPERATION IN
SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Letter dated 16 June 1981 from the Permanent Representative of
India to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to your note of 1 June 1981 regarding the international conference on Kampuchea which will be convened in New York in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/6 of 22 October 1980.

India has traditionally been deeply interested in developments in South-East Asia, including Kampuchea. India's friendly relations with all the countries of South-East Asia are based upon the closest cultural, social, religious, intellectual and linguistic links over the centuries. In more recent times, during their struggle for freedom and independence, India had extended its sympathy and support to them. Since the early 1950s, India has consistently tried to help resolve problems in that region. It will be recalled that, under the 1954 Geneva Agreement on Indo-China, India carried out the role of Chairman of the International Control Commission established in the three States of Indo-China.

India cannot but remain concerned about events affecting international peace and security, particularly in its neighbourhood. Equally, it continues to be prepared to join in all constructive efforts aimed at seeking a peaceful solution to the problems of the region. However, the approach embodied in resolution 35/6 was not directed to this end. Therefore, in pursuance of its principled position, India abstained on that resolution which, inter alia, provided for the international conference on Kampuchea.

* A/36/50.

India has decided not to participate in this conference. The reasons for its non-participation are detailed in the following paragraphs:

1. The people of Kampuchea are only now beginning to emerge from the holocaust visited upon them by the Pol Pot régime, in addition to the deprivations they had to endure during the struggle of the peoples of Indo-China for national liberation, independence and sovereignty. Under the Government of the Peoples' Republic of Kampuchea and with the help of the international community, the people of Kampuchea are currently engaged in a massive effort at economic and social reconstruction. An encouraging sign is that prospects of widespread famine and disease appear to have receded. Any international conference would need to reassure the people of Kampuchea that this process would not be reversed and that their erstwhile persecutors would not be allowed again to unleash a reign of terror on them. On the other hand, a conference which accords recognition to the Pol Pot régime will not serve this purpose.

2. The Government of India is gravely concerned over the existing tensions in South-East Asia and is convinced of the need for a peaceful political solution based on the principles of the inadmissibility of the use of force and non-interference in the affairs of sovereign States. This comprehensive political solution, as expressed in the New Delhi Declaration (A/36/116, annex) of the Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Non-Aligned Countries held in February 1981, should provide for the withdrawal of all foreign forces and for full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all States in the region, including Kampuchea. The involvement and intervention of outside Powers in the region has exacerbated tensions and must be eliminated. The Government of India is convinced that such a solution can only be achieved through a dialogue between the countries of the region and, in this context, the international community has an obligation to encourage direct contacts between the States of the region.

3. An international conference based on a resolution rejected by several of the countries directly concerned may retard the prospects of a meaningful dialogue. It may well result in a hardening of attitudes on all sides, leading to increased tensions and possible confrontation, and thus be counter-productive.

I should be grateful if this communication were circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under items 22 and 34 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) M. KRISHNIAH
Ambassador

Permanent Representative of India
to the United Nations