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President: Mr. Ismat T. KITTANI (Iraq).

AGENDA ITEM 16

**Appointment of the Secretary-General
of the United Nations**

1. The PRESIDENT: The General Assembly has before it a letter dated 11 December 1981 from the President of the Security Council to the President of the General Assembly [A/36/820]. It reads as follows:

"I have the honour to inform you that the Security Council, at its 2312th meeting, held in private on 11 December 1981, unanimously adopted resolution 494 (1981) concerning the appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The resolution reads as follows:

"*The Security Council,*

"*Having considered* the question of the recommendation for the appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations,

"*Recommends* to the General Assembly that Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar be appointed Secretary-General of the United Nations for a term of office from 1 January 1982 to 31 December 1986."

2. In connection with this recommendation of the Security Council, the General Assembly has before it a draft resolution in document A/36/L.56, the only document before the Assembly on which action is required.

3. In view of the unanimous recommendation of the Security Council and in the light of the wish expressed by many delegations, may I take it that it is the desire of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/36/L.56 by acclamation?

The draft resolution was adopted by acclamation (resolution 36/137).

4. The PRESIDENT: I have the honour to announce that Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar has been appointed by acclamation Secretary-General of the United Nations for a term of office beginning 1 January 1982 and ending on 31 December 1986.

The President of the Security Council, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the Trusteeship Council, the Vice-President of the General

Assembly and the Chairmen of the Main Committees took places on the platform.

Mr. Aly I. Teymour, Chief of Protocol, conducted Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar to the platform.

5. The PRESIDENT: I have the honour to inform Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar officially that the General Assembly has appointed him Secretary-General of the United Nations for a term of office beginning 1 January 1982 and ending on 31 December 1986.

6. I ask Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar to repeat after me the oath of office.

7. Mr. PÉREZ DE CUÉLLAR: I, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, solemnly swear to exercise in all loyalty, discretion and conscience the functions entrusted to me as Secretary-General of the United Nations, to discharge these functions and regulate my conduct with the interests of the United Nations only in view, and not to seek or accept instructions in regard to the performance of my duties from any Government or other authority external to the Organization.

8. The PRESIDENT: I am certain that on this occasion I speak for every member of the General Assembly in extending our sincere congratulations to the Secretary-General-elect. We welcome him most warmly, and we pledge him our full co-operation and support. We wish him a very fruitful term of office and extend all our best wishes to him in his future endeavours in the interests of the international community. May the United Nations, under his leadership, move further forward in becoming the centre for harmonizing actions as foreseen in the Charter.

9. I now invite Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar to make a statement.

10. Mr. PÉREZ DE CUÉLLAR (*interpretation from Spanish*): Mr. President, I am greatly honoured and moved by your kind and generous words of welcome.

11. The trust and confidence placed in me fills me with deep gratitude and humility. I am profoundly grateful to the President and the members of the Security Council for recommending my appointment and to the General Assembly for accepting the recommendation by acclamation. I stand here before the entire membership of the United Nations, mindful that the support it has given me is an expression of its solidarity. This is and will be my ultimate source of strength. I fully realize that the task that has been entrusted to me is unique in its nature, complexity and magnitude. I pledge to you my utmost dedication and impartiality in discharging the responsibilities deriving from that task.

12. I am also aware that my appointment indicates recognition of the important role being played by Africa, Asia and Latin America in our collective struggle to realize the aims and purposes laid down in the Charter of the

United Nations. I believe that, in consequence of the near universality of representation achieved by the Organization, one of the essential conditions for strengthening the foundations of peace, justice and progress throughout the world is a practical awareness of the vital aspirations of the majority of mankind consistent with the requirements of stability and balance.

13. This is not an election campaign speech, as I have already been elected. Hence, I do not propose to offer a programme or to make promises. This would not be appropriate to the nature of the function that I am going to fulfil. The General Assembly, whose session is drawing to a close, has reviewed the major issues for which the Organization has responsibility: disarmament; social and economic matters, including human rights; the vestiges of colonialism, and the development of international law, among others. As an important part of my service to the Organization, I shall assist in the implementation of the Assembly's decisions in these fields.

14. I am aware—and the ever-vigilant international press has made it its business to keep us mindful of the fact—that we are going through a period of intense and renewed criticism of the United Nations.

15. The Secretary-General is usually an easy target for such criticism, which sometimes can be attributed to other bodies in the United Nations. They have had to be faced by the four Secretaries-General, but perhaps now they are more intensive because of the renewed international tension, a growing feeling of frustration among the developing countries and the proportionate disappointment on the part of the world public. We may also glimpse a sort of groundswell which could almost be described as revisionist.

16. I shall resist the temptation to answer those criticisms with the platitude that the United Nations is merely a reflection of the political will and actions of the States Members. As its name indicates and as is apparent from the Charter, the United Nations is a body of States gathered together for purposes and ends which go beyond and above purely national motives. Hence this house symbolizes an entity that is conceptually different from the component parts. It is almost possible to say, paraphrasing Darwin, that, being a more complex entity, the Organization is a more advanced evolutionary form, since it represents a kind of community life that is higher than what would prevail if it did not exist.

17. For these reasons, I think that the United Nations does not need to apologize for the fact that it is in the forefront and for possessing this element of futurism which of necessity must appear in its activities. There will always be someone to tell us that we are an idea whose time has not yet come, but we have to arm ourselves not only with courage but also with the feeling of reality which is necessary so as not to be overcome by discouragement, like the mythological character who was for ever pushing a rock uphill.

18. I must say that I do have a clear and at the same time a sober and positive idea of the responsibilities given to me by the General Assembly's decision. In the past 10 years I have been almost constantly linked to the Organization. A good part of those years I have spent exclusively in the Organization's service. I have been able to get the feeling of its political dramas, both in the Security Council, where I had to preside at difficult times, and in the Secretariat, on delicate missions in various

countries. I have had the opportunity also, as Chairman of the Group of 77, to participate fully in the frustrating endeavours to bring about a new international economic order. I have seen for myself, as an international official, the requirements of the Organization's staff.

19. I was trained in law, and therefore I am aware that the Secretary-General is at the service of the international community and specifically of this Organization. I know that he does not have a supranational function, but an inherent part of the responsibility of the Secretary-General to the community—and the practical consequence of the existence of a body such as this—is that he become the advocate of the causes of common interest. No one is more clearly above national or regional considerations.

20. The Secretary-General, in order to fulfil his responsibilities properly, must be able to rely on the understanding, the patience and the support of Member States, particularly when he has to adopt attitudes which may seem to run counter to their positions or short-term inclinations. His sole guiding star must be the promotion of causes favourable to the progress of all, for the benefit of all, on the basis of international peace and security and unswervingly directed towards justice, in conformity with the mandate given him by the Charter. It is my firm purpose in this regard to reactivate the political role of the Secretary-General within our constitutional parameters, always attentive to the very rapid development of events and taking care not to be dragged along by them. I clearly perceive the importance of the trust that has been placed in me by all Members of the Organization, and it is my intention to make use of it by consultation and in the interest of consensus, because these constitute the very essence of our common task.

21. I am assuming the post of Secretary-General at a time when, after a long period of delay, the long-standing initiative for the renewal of global negotiations between North and South is coming back within the purview of the United Nations. This coincides with one of the most serious world economic crises of the past few decades, the most sorely pressed victims of which are the populations of the developing countries. The social and political thrust of the crisis is axiomatic. In so far as the just and proper expectations, for so long unfulfilled, of thousands of millions of human beings are disappointed yet again, and at a time of political confrontation, the most fundamental human rights, particularly the right to a better distribution of wealth and social well-being, are in fact being infringed.

22. Despite the ecumenical nature of the task that I am going to assume as Secretary-General of all the United Nations, I am a Peruvian, and I cannot and must not separate myself from my origins in a developing country, and, furthermore, from the fact that I have represented it as a diplomat throughout almost my entire adult life. It has been my fortune to participate in the preparation and execution of the foreign policy of my country and of the third world many times. Therefore I am very much aware of the need to provide an impetus to the renewal of global negotiations, and I wish to say now that, beyond the contribution that the Secretariat can give in its administrative and advisory functions, I will always be ready to give my personal co-operation, if that should prove desirable.

[The Secretary-General-elect continued in English.]

23. I could not hope to act fruitfully in any of the areas to which I have alluded if I were not able to avail myself of one of the most capable and dedicated civil services in the world. I have witnessed its qualities personally. I am aware, however, that there may be a kind of revolution of rising expectations brewing. I wish to launch an appeal to those men and women, whom I admire and respect so much for their support, in order that we may turn the Secretariat once again into an active organization for peace and development, an instrument ever less bureaucratic, ever more integrated and efficacious. The fact that greater responsibility goes hand in hand with an improvement in working conditions does not escape me; I trust that I can count on their understanding, co-operation and imagination in the search for satisfactory solutions to their problems, to the examination of which I propose to give priority.

24. In order to galvanize the Secretariat and to integrate it more organically into the action of the United Nations as a whole, I need to count on the support of Member States. I am to head a Secretariat which must preserve its basic sense as an authentic international civil service so as genuinely to serve the interests of the international community. In accordance with the Charter, this necessarily entails strict independence with respect to the national interests of the States which are a part of the Organization. I fully trust the General Assembly, which lays down the rules for the appointment by the Secretary-General of Secretariat personnel, to provide me with tools required for the full discharge of my task—not for the purpose of promoting greater growth in the Secretariat than is necessary, but rather with the main purpose of making the present Secretariat ever more efficient, morally committed, as I hope it will feel, to the goals of the international community as reflected in the Charter.

[The Secretary-General-elect continued in French.]

25. I wish to assure you that my sole ambition is to serve the higher interests of the international community and to work for the realization of the ideals and aspirations of which the Organization is the repository and of which it must remain the symbol.

26. It is my conviction that the Organization must constantly represent the expression of the universal conscience. To that end I shall do everything within my power to ensure that the purposes and principles of the Charter are scrupulously observed. I shall take up every problem or issue in an open-minded fashion and I shall act with awareness and according to conscience, on the basis of right, law and justice.

[The Secretary-General-elect resumed in Spanish.]

27. I am sorry that I cannot speak Arabic, Chinese or Russian, which are admirable languages, and thus better express my thinking to the representatives who use those official working languages.

28. I do not wish to close this my first statement to the General Assembly as Secretary-General without paying a proper tribute to Mr. Kurt Waldheim, who on various occasions in the last decade, has done me the honour of showing his confidence in me in many areas. His devotion to peace is deservedly on record for history. I wish as a close colleague and co-worker in the diplomatic service to bear witness to his outstanding skill as a negotiator and to his untiring tenacity in the service of the international community.

29. The noble oath that I have just taken before the Assembly as the consummate democratic body of the Organization might have exempted me from reading out this statement. Hence I wish to conclude by reiterating that I shall carry out that oath with loyalty, discretion and conscientiousness.

30. The PRESIDENT: I now call on the representative of Botswana to address the Assembly on behalf of the group of African States.

31. Mr. LEGWAILA (Botswana): I speak on behalf of a group of States whose commitment to and faith in this the United Nations are well known. Africa has always regarded this global Organization, this United Nations, as a place of refuge for the weak and the vulnerable—a place where the weak and the powerful, the rich and the poor, the North and the South, are given equal opportunity to dream dreams, to aspire and to hope; to participate freely and actively in the never-ending quest for peace, for love and for the brotherhood of man; for it is only too obvious that in the final analysis it is we, the poor, the weak and the vulnerable, who will benefit most from the successful creation of a world without conflict or war, a world without discrimination based on colour or race or on the extremities of wealth and poverty, a world with unlimited opportunities for both the strong and the weak.

32. Therefore this occasion is of great importance to us, for we share in the abiding hope that the new Secretary-General, like his predecessor, will continue to spend restless days and sleepless nights in the service of the United Nations, in the service of mankind. We from Africa promise nothing less than full and active co-operation with the new Secretary-General, just as we indeed extended to his predecessor nothing less than full and active co-operation in the discharge of his enormous responsibilities.

33. The new Secretary-General is of course only too familiar with what fate has plunged him into. He has served the United Nations for many years and knows the well nigh impossible tasks the Organization faces—which, by this act of inauguration, are being unloaded on his shoulders, with our goodwill and best wishes assured, of course. Our support for your exertions, Sir, will always be without reservation or equivocation.

34. You know the problems of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. They are still there, stubbornly refusing to be resolved. Some, like those we have in Africa, were there even before the United Nations was formed and have continued to haunt every Secretary-General who has served the Organization.

35. We in Africa have no doubt that the new Secretary-General is a man of vision, whose shoulders are broad enough to carry the responsibilities which this office, the office of Secretary-General of the United Nations, imposes. It is an honour and a privilege therefore, on behalf of the group of African States, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to this high office. In the African group you have friends and supporters who will always wish you every success in your endeavours.

36. It is my pleasant duty also to extend to the outgoing Secretary-General our sincere gratitude for a job well done. You, Sir, discharged your responsibilities as an international civil servant *par excellence* with a skill and tenacity of purpose which history cannot afford to forget,

any more than can we who have been so fortunate as to serve at the United Nations under your quiet but deliberate and purposeful leadership. May you continue to be of service to your fellow men.

37. The PRESIDENT: I call on the representative of the Philippines, who will speak on behalf of the group of Asian States.

38. Mr. YANGO (Philippines): We have just witnessed a solemn and momentous event. We have just marked a milestone in the history of the United Nations with the swearing-in of the fifth Secretary-General of the Organization.

39. On behalf of the group of Asian States, allow me to congratulate Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar of Peru as the new Secretary-General, who, in the words of the Charter, is the chief administrative officer of the United Nations. After six weeks of intense anxiety and uncertainty on the part of all concerned, the Security Council, under the capable leadership of its President, Mr. Otunnu of Uganda, finally broke the impasse and recommended the appointment of Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar as the new Secretary-General, to commence his duties on 1 January 1982.

40. I am sure I speak for the Asian group when I say with candour and sincerity that the new Secretary-General is both a wise and an eminently suitable choice for the post. Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar is no stranger to the United Nations having had a highly regarded career in the Organization, where he first served as Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations. Subsequently he served in the Secretariat with the rank of Under-Secretary-General and was assigned by the Secretary-General to be his Special Representative in Cyprus and later his Personal Representative in Afghanistan. In terms of education, he is well qualified and prepared for the job, having been a professor of international law and the author of a number of books on that subject.

41. To know the man is to admire and respect him. The country of Peru and its people should be proud of him, not only because he has proved himself to be a noteworthy representative of his country, but also because he has brought honour and distinction to it by having been selected as Secretary-General.

42. The Secretary-General, Mr. Waldheim, should also be proud of him, because it can be said that it was during his term of office, that the Under-Secretary-General displayed his talent for leadership. We in the Organization are equally proud, because he was one of us, he rose from the ranks and he made it to the top. He possesses qualities that seem to be opposites but are complementary—he is gentle but cautious in his dealings and patient but determined in his endeavours. I know him personally to be a skilful and seasoned diplomat, because at one time he was also assigned by the Secretary-General to work on the problem of Kampuchea.

43. We in the Asian group look forward to working with the new Secretary-General and we here and now assure him of our co-operation in his new tasks and responsibilities. It has been said that the post of Secretary-General is an impossible one. But this should not discourage or deter our new man, because previous Secretaries-General have accomplished much for the good of the Organization and of the world at large. Knowing as we do Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar as a person, we feel no doubt that he will be equal to the job and that as a man from humble

beginnings he will try ever harder to acquit himself well in this so-called impossible job. It is in this sense and on behalf of the group of Asian States that I welcome Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar and wish him a most fruitful and distinguished term of office.

44. At this point, may I also say that what we have just witnessed meant the changing of the guard at the United Nations. As the new Secretary-General assumes his post, Mr. Waldheim, the admired and highly respected Secretary-General, will be leaving the Organization, which he has headed and administered for the past 10 years. Having been personally associated with the Organization during that period of time, I must say that my first impression of Mr. Waldheim when I met him in 1966, when he was the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations, proved to be very much justified. He has always conducted himself as a true diplomat, in appearance, in demeanour, in speech and in every sense of the word.

45. These past 10 years in the life of the Organization have been exciting, eventful and at times even tumultuous. As events continued to unfold, Mr. Waldheim left his imprint on each one of them. To know and to understand the man, I recommend a rereading of his book, *Building the Future Order: The Search for Peace in an Interdependent World*, which is a compilation of his innermost views, feelings and sentiments about the United Nations. Thus, through his book, we can see the man, his true worth and his lasting contribution to the Organization.

46. As chief officer of the Organization he has shown a remarkable capacity for hard work, devoting long hours with patience and determination to the problems of the United Nations. We admire the man for his skilled and unobtrusive performance in this complex job. He certainly deserves praise and commendation. Because of his eminent qualifications and achievements, I am confident that greater things are in store for him. Fondly shall we recall the last 10 years as the "Waldheim" years. We are sad that he is leaving but we sincerely wish him and Mrs. Waldheim all the best for the future.

47. The PRESIDENT: I call on the representative of Romania, who will speak on behalf of the group of Eastern European States.

48. Mr. MARINESCU (Romania) (*interpretation from French*): This solemn moment in the life of the Organization offers me the unique opportunity and the signal honour of extending, in my capacity as chairman of the group of Eastern European States for this month, heartfelt congratulations and best wishes for complete success in the fulfilment of his lofty responsibilities to Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar, whom the General Assembly has just unanimously appointed Secretary-General of the United Nations.

49. It is especially pleasurable to welcome the happy choice of Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar for the highest post within the United Nations since I, like many of us here, have long had the personal privilege of knowing and appreciating his eminent qualities as politician and diplomat, his profound knowledge of international affairs and his unswerving commitment to the cause of the Organization.

50. As is well known, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar has already served the Organization with distinction for many years and the difficult and delicate missions of great political

import that he has discharged have amply proved his great competence.

51. This appointment constitutes a tribute both to the noble Peruvian nation and to the front-rank contributions to the activities of the United Nations made by the Latin American countries, which have inherited a rich tradition in the struggle for independence and national sovereignty, for the promotion of justice and law in relations among States.

52. I should like to refer on this happy occasion, to the relations of friendship and co-operation which my country, Romania, as indeed all the countries in the Eastern European group, have developed with Peru, the affinities of language and culture which bring us close, and to extend to Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar the heartfelt congratulations of my Government.

53. We also see in the appointment of the new Secretary-General a highly important confirmation of the pre-eminent place in international life taken by the developing and non-aligned countries, whose growing participation is an essential condition for resolving the most serious problems facing our contemporary world.

54. In welcoming his nomination to the post of Secretary-General, we should like to assure Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar of our full support in the discharge of his great responsibilities and to express the conviction that his activity will help to strengthen, in keeping with the hopes of people, the role of the Organization in the solution of the crucial problems confronting the international community, particularly those of disarmament, and especially nuclear disarmament; the elimination of under-development and the establishment of a new international economic order; a just and lasting solution to disputes and conflicts by peaceful means; the complete elimination of colonialism and neo-colonialism and of all forms of foreign domination; and respect for international legality in relations among all States.

55. At the same time, we should like to express our profound gratitude to Mr. Waldheim, for his tireless activity on behalf of the international community and for his devotion to the United Nations. He has discharged the functions of Secretary-General with distinction and self-denial for a decade, that is to say, for a significant portion of the history of the Organization, throughout a period when the Members of the United Nations were confronted by problems of a complexity and scope never before known and by a series of international crises and conflicts.

56. The great competence and high sense of duty demonstrated by Mr. Waldheim throughout that lengthy period, and the eminent service that he has rendered to the United Nations have won for him well-deserved esteem and appreciation throughout the world. Having been associated for a long time with the name and activities of the United Nations, Mr. Waldheim transmits to us a vivid example of devotion, of tireless efforts in the service of international peace and co-operation, for which we are profoundly grateful to him.

57. It is a particular pleasure for me to extend to Mr. Waldheim, on behalf of the delegations in the group of Eastern European States, our feelings of gratitude and our deep appreciation and to extend to him every wish for success in his future activities, as well as our good wishes for his personal happiness.

58. The PRESIDENT: I call on the representative of Nicaragua, who will speak on behalf of the group of Latin American States.

59. Mr. CHAMORRO MORA (Nicaragua) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is with great satisfaction that I speak on behalf of the group of Latin American States on the occasion of the Assembly's appointment for the period from January 1982 to December 1986, of the new Secretary-General, a representative of the third world, of the non-aligned movement, of Latin America and of the brother republic of Peru.

60. We are in very difficult times. The Middle East, southern Africa, and Central America, among others, are in critical situations which must be handled with caution, consideration and good sense, conducive to dialogue and a political solution which will enable us to find appropriate means to avoid or at least diminish the devastating effects of wider conflagrations.

61. The United Nations, of which we are all honoured to be Members, has a great responsibility particularly towards the underdeveloped countries. This body must therefore be led by a person who has both knowledge and skill, prudence and decision-making ability, calm judgement and astuteness, the wisdom called for to deal with weighty responsibilities and also the skill, political grasp and independence of thinking, which coupled with serenity and the ability to weigh things in the balance are necessary in order properly to deal with the great tasks entrusted by humanity to the United Nations and to the Secretary-General.

62. It is a source of deep satisfaction to Latin America, to the non-aligned movement and to the third world in general that this man with those necessary qualities for taking on major responsibilities should be one of their beloved sons. We welcome this because, among other things, we feel the time has come for the world to realize that in these regions there are people able to direct the future of mankind just as well or better than those from other more privileged regions or nations.

63. The third world's time has come. We in the United Nations are living through an historic moment in swearing in a Secretary-General who represents the third world and the non-aligned movement under the presidency of another third world and non-aligned representative, Mr. Kittani of Iraq. In assuming our great responsibilities today, we must realize that the Secretary-General needs our understanding and support.

64. We are profoundly grateful that this historic moment for the third world has been understood by the community of nations and that Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar has been elected Secretary-General by acclamation. We regard this as unanimous support for the recommendation made by the Security Council which will strengthen his administration, and as acknowledgment of the personal merits of this son of Peru, heir to all the tradition and culture of the Incas.

65. Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar, whom we honour, is furthermore a very cultivated man, an experienced diplomat well-versed in the ways of the Organization. A lawyer, a graduate of the Faculty of Law of the Catholic University of Lima, he entered the diplomatic service in 1940 and was the Ambassador of his country to Venezuela, Switzerland, Poland and the Soviet Union. He was Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus

and was appointed Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs in 1979. Subsequently, in 1981 he was appointed Personal Representative of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan.

66. Everyone is conversant with the wisdom, skill and good judgement the new Secretary-General, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar, has shown in every responsible post that he has held. We are sure that his activities have promoted the strengthening of international peace and security. We know that in the future his efforts and devotion will be even greater. We hope that the responsibilities he is soon to take up will mean even greater commitment to mankind.

67. The election of a Latin American is a triumph not simply of a region but of the collective effort of the developing and the non-aligned nations. It is a triumph for the historically significant causes of Latin America, which are shared by the large majority of the world. Hence we are sure that in the delicate task now entrusted to him, this erudite lawyer and able diplomat with a long and varied, brilliant relationship with the United Nations—in other words with the preservation of peace and with decolonization—will be able to rely on the full support of nations here represented.

68. In closing I would express the gratitude of the group of Latin American States to Mr. Waldheim, whose contribution to the strengthening of the Organization is recorded in the annals of the United Nations. Recorded also are the tact and the singular discretion with which he dealt with the most serious international conflicts, and his commitment to the just causes of the third world countries, recognized by the international community.

69. The PRESIDENT: I now call on the representative of France, who will speak on behalf of the group of Western European and other States.

70. Mr. LEPRETTE (France) (*interpretation from French*): As chairman of the group of Western European and other States, I wish to extend our best wishes and congratulations to the fifth Secretary-General, whom the General Assembly has just appointed by acclamation. It is a joy and a privilege for me to welcome Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar. Although I am far from being the doyen of the Permanent Representatives in New York, I find it a pleasant task to greet a friend of long standing. We know him as a diplomat of great experience, whose career has caused our paths to cross several times, in his function as Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations, as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus and as Under-Secretary-General.

71. For 10 years Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar has linked his fate with that of the Organization, and we can only welcome the fact that the great qualities he has thus acquired have today been consecrated. The United Nations and its bodies, beginning with the General Assembly and the Security Council, in their quest for peace, their will to ensure tolerance and justice, and their fulfilment of their task of serving social and economic progress, need the guidance of a man of conciliation and wisdom, who, with respect for the principles of impartiality established by the Charter, will for five years be the unchallenged mandated representative of our common will. Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar will certainly be—we are privileged to be aware of this already, because we know him—the right man. We pledge him our support.

72. I add how happy the group of Western European and other States are that the Secretary-General who has just been appointed comes from a Latin American country, Peru, which very early affirmed its vocation as an active, genuinely non-aligned country. Through its history, culture and trade Europe feels close to Peru and Latin America. It is fortunate that a representative of that continent has today been called upon to give real meaning and full value to the interdependent future of our entire international community.

73. Finally, while saluting Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar, I should like to pay a tribute to his predecessor, who has done great honour to the office of Secretary-General. The trust that we placed in him was never betrayed. He not only witnessed the great international changes that we have been experiencing for 10 years, but often was able to foresee them, understand them, and even more important, make them accepted. We shall never forget that he was, among other things, the indefatigable promoter, on behalf of us all, of a new international economic order, of a new law of the sea, of the solution of acute problems such as the independence of Namibia and the question of Cyprus, and the commitment of the United Nations to the great cause of disarmament. On every occasion he showed clear thinking and courage. He always proved himself equal to the most difficult missions that we entrusted to him, which he accepted in order to serve the international community. We remember them all. The group of Western European and other States will not forget him. Mr. Waldheim, who has so well represented his country, Austria, a faithful supporter of the United Nations, will leave us with the memory of a statesman who has devoted all his activities to the cause of international peace. We are extremely grateful to him for that.

74. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Arabic*): I call on the representative of Kuwait, who will speak on behalf of the group of Arab States.

75. Mr. ABULHASSAN (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The General Assembly has today placed its full confidence in Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar by entrusting to him the post of Secretary-General of the Organization for the next five years. On behalf of the group of Arab States, I wish to express to him our most sincere congratulations on the trust shown in him as he takes on his tremendous responsibilities at a crucial stage in the history of the United Nations.

76. Before I continue my remarks about this very correct choice made by the Assembly, I wish to pay a tribute to the important, excellent part played by the current Secretary-General, Mr. Kurt Waldheim. He has conducted the business of the United Nations with sincerity and devotion, acknowledged by everyone, over a very difficult period. On behalf of the group of Arab States, I wish him every success in this future life.

77. The group of Arab States, in transferring its trust in the purposes and principles of the United Nations to the person of the new Secretary-General, wishes to convey its esteem for his high degree of competence and talents and his wide-ranging experience in the political and diplomatic fields. He has also in the eyes of all those who have worked with him in other bodies in the United Nations, distinguished himself as the representative of his country and as a part of the Organization.

78. The new Secretary-General will take up his post at a very dangerous time in international relations. Interna-

tional conflicts have worsened, the tension of the cold war has been aggravated and the foundations of world peace have been disturbed because of flagrant violations of the principles and purposes of the Charter. The international economic situation has been affected and has even deteriorated. The gap between the developed and the developing countries has widened, while the economic burdens upon the developing countries have increased due to the inflationary and other policies of some developed countries. That is because the developed countries have neglected the needs of the developing countries. We believe that the responsibility for reducing the burden of underdevelopment and encouraging the process of development in the developing countries must be taken at the international level. We are fully persuaded that the new Secretary-General will expend every effort and use all means at his disposal in the Organization to serve the noble objectives of the Charter and to fulfil the hopes and expectations of all mankind.

79. I wish to convey the congratulations of the Arab group to the new Secretary-General, while recalling that the Middle East, which is one of the most sensitive regions of the world because of its strategic importance, continues to be one of the most dangerous flashpoints, posing a threat to peace and security in the region and throughout the world. We are convinced that the qualities which the new Secretary-General possesses will enable him to participate fully in the solution of the problems in that region, on the basis of logic and of justice for the Arab cause. Equitable treatment of the question will prevent further crises in that region. We wish, therefore, to welcome the new Secretary-General as a fellow citizen of the third world and of the non-aligned movement. We are sure that this will be a determining factor in his perception of the problems of the third world. Those problems, particularly the situations in the Middle East and in southern Africa, are now troubling the whole world.

80. The new Secretary-General, through his talents and competence, will be able to hold pride of place for the United Nations in the heart of peoples throughout the world, and particularly among the third world.

81. Mrs. KIRKPATRICK (United States of America): It is my great pleasure, on behalf of the United States in its role as host country to the United Nations, to welcome most warmly the selection of Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar as the Organization's next Secretary-General. His selection is a well-deserved recognition of his long and dedicated service to his Government and to the United Nations. It is a recognition also of his superb qualifications for this position. We have every confidence that Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar will prove a most worthy successor to Mr. Waldheim, who for 10 years has guided the Organization with such very great skill and dedication. I should like to take this opportunity to express to Mr. Waldheim our deepest gratitude for the energy, wisdom and statesmanship he has shown during his long years of service to the United Nations.

82. Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar's qualifications are well known to all of us here—too well known to warrant repeating at this time. I take great pleasure in the fact that he is the first citizen of Latin America to be named to this important post. It is a special pleasure and honour to all of us in the hemisphere. In this regard, I should like to share with the members the following message from the United States Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, to Peru's Prime Minister:

"I share your great satisfaction at the selection of Ambassador Javier Pérez de Cuéllar to be the next Secretary-General of the United Nations. This action honours not only your nation but also the policies pursued by your Government. We have the highest regard for Ambassador Pérez de Cuéllar and for the diplomatic tradition which he represents. My congratulations to Peru for being the first nation in Latin America to have a citizen elected to this high post. With personal best wishes, I am, sincerely, Alexander M. Haig, Jr."

I might add here that our Vice-President, George Bush, had the honour and pleasure of serving here at the United Nations with Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar and has extended his personal congratulations to the next Secretary-General.

83. Finally, I should like to add my own personal congratulations and personal best wishes to Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar for his every success. I and my Government look forward with great pleasure to working closely with him in the months ahead. I wish to assure him of the host country's fullest co-operation and support in discharging the duties of his new, extremely difficult and most important position.

84. The PRESIDENT: I now invite the Secretary-General, Mr. Kurt Waldheim, to address the Assembly.

85. The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I am deeply touched by and most grateful for all the kind words addressed to me here today. This is for me a moving moment. To serve in this high office is a great and unique privilege. It is an experience unlike any other. It provides an unrivalled opportunity to assist in the affairs of peoples and of nations and to learn about the noble, as well as the ignoble, side of human nature. It is an opportunity to participate in the most important and difficult human experiment ever undertaken—building the new structure of an interdependent world. And this high office brings one into active contact with the leaders and representatives of all the nations in a common effort to face the challenges of the present and to build for the future. Naturally, I shall miss all these facets of the office of Secretary-General.

86. This is also a comforting moment, because it is in many ways a relief to lay down a great burden and to look back over the long and hard road we have travelled together since 1971 when I became Secretary-General. The experience of those 10 years has profoundly reinforced my conviction of the necessity to maintain, develop and strengthen the United Nations. The frustrations and difficulties I have encountered have only confirmed my view that the United Nations is an absolutely essential institution, not only for present problems, but for the sane and orderly conduct of human affairs in the future.

87. When we make judgements about the Organization it is well to do so on the basis of its fundamental nature, rather than on the basis of what this or that nation or group of nations would wish it to be or to do. We must always bear in mind that the United Nations is an organization of all nations and the property of none. It is the place where nations should come together to harmonize their actions for the attainment of the common ends of the Charter. It should be used primarily for resolving disputes and conflicts, rather than as a forum for pursuing them. It should not be viewed as the instrument of one group or one nation against another.

88. Our first and primary purpose here is the maintenance of international peace and security and the development of a reliable day-to-day system of world order respected and adhered to by all States. We are still very far from such a goal. This vision of the founders of the Organization was inspired to a great extent by a major world catastrophe, the Second World War. It was their intention to provide, through the United Nations, an alternative to the international anarchy which, in this century alone, has given rise to two world wars. We must never lose sight of this primary goal.

89. We should not underestimate the successes of the Organization in the maintenance of international peace and security. We are developing, for example, with considerable success a means of conflict control—peace-keeping—which is an important part of wider political and diplomatic efforts to keep the peace. Above all, the United Nations is a place of last resort for Member States when a fatal confrontation threatens.

90. I do not need to emphasize the historic importance of the function of the Organization as an agent of peaceful change. It has acted as a catalyst in the process of decolonization, and very successfully, and currently is doing so in the effort to adjust relations between the industrial and the developing countries. Here again, the magnitude and complexity of problems related to the North-South dialogue and the interlinked question of global negotiations may seem at times discouraging. But we must persevere with courage, patience and understanding, inspired rather than dismayed by the great mission we have undertaken.

91. Another major purpose of the United Nations is the development of co-operative approaches to the new generation of global problems which have grown out of the technological revolution and the increasing interdependence of States. The United Nations has become a forum in which these problems can be discussed with a view to helping Governments to face up to these challenges together. The efforts of the United Nations on such problems have, I believe, had a decisive effect in raising the consciousness of people all over the world. We must now strive to achieve practical results.

92. It has always seemed to me that all our activities can and should contribute to the progressive development of an international system based on the rule of law, which will increasingly benefit all its members and promote human rights. Obviously, we are only in the very early stages of such a development, but unless we have this very ambitious perspective in mind our efforts here are likely to be fragmentary and to fall short of our professed aims.

93. I believe more strongly than ever that the United Nations is the best available, if not the only, alternative to the ever-present risk of nuclear disaster or international anarchy. For this reason I am appalled at the superficial judgements that are often made about the Organization and at the levity and cynicism with which its activities are all too often portrayed. Most great ideas and great institutions have gone through an initial period of denigration and scepticism, but we must not allow the United Nations to be seriously undermined by such a process. Sometimes I have the feeling that the lessons of two world wars have been forgotten and that the privations of more than half of the human race and the mortal danger of most of the other half are not really considered to be vital factors in the conduct of international affairs. The

nuclear threat overshadows virtually the entire human family. These are the true perspectives in which we should evaluate the validity of what we try to do here.

94. It is true that, like many deliberative bodies, the United Nations has its fair share of difficulties, frustrations and situations which should have been avoided by common sense and vision. I do not have to stress this here; members know it; they are going through this experience almost every day. Sometimes, for political and emotional reasons, the efforts of the Organization to solve great problems prove counter-productive and its approach self-defeating. Often one group of nations conceives that another group is leading the Organization in a direction of which it does not approve and accordingly diminishes its support for its work. Throughout the history of the United Nations—and I go back to 1945—we have witnessed the phenomenon of predominant majorities and bloc voting. Sometimes these tendencies have taken us in one direction and sometimes in another. However, neither majorities nor blocs are immutable or monolithic, and all are subject to the process of historic change, which we witness in this great Organization. What is unquestionably true is that we need to consider issues on their merits and learn to take decisions accordingly. Our present difficulties are not reasons for giving up the efforts to make the United Nations work. On the contrary, they are reasons for intensifying that effort.

95. In my 10 years as Secretary-General I have experienced exhilarating moments when the collective will of Governments demonstrated the possibilities of the United Nations if it is used in an imaginative and courageous manner. The great relief operation in Bangladesh, for instance, in the early 1970s showed dramatically how the Governments of the world, the different organizations of the United Nations system and various voluntary agencies can work together under the overall co-ordination of the United Nations to deal with a humanitarian emergency of major proportions. We have since seen similar massive international efforts to deal with humanitarian emergencies in Africa, in Asia, in Indo-China and elsewhere.

96. The efforts of the Security Council in the Middle East war of 1973 were a remarkable example of the capacity of the Security Council to limit and control conflict, as well as the practical capacity of the Organization to carry out decisive peace-keeping operations at short notice in times of acute international crisis. Another vital exercise in conflict control began in 1978 with the installation of the peace-keeping force in south Lebanon. These are only a few examples of the proven ability of the Organization to rise to the challenges of our time.

97. There have, I must admit, been other occasions when I have found the inability of the United Nations to take effective action profoundly discouraging. Unfortunately, there are many times when the collective will and unity of purpose of the membership is definitely not sufficient to deal with critical situations effectively. If international problems can be resolved outside the United Nations, that is all to the good. But there is surely something wrong when, as sometimes happens, the Organization is unable to come to grips with situations which are a definite threat to world peace or to world stability. I strongly urge Governments of Member States to pay far more attention to this absolutely fundamental problem before we reach a situation where conflict and confrontation run out of control and lead to massive disaster. The machinery is there. What is needed is a

steady determination to develop our institutions and to make them work properly.

98. I cannot, in all honesty, fail to refer to some of the basic causes of our difficulties. The United Nations is built upon some formidable divisions in the world. We have to see that; we have to recognize it. The most prominent rift is obviously the East-West division, which runs through the heart of the Organization and often weakens or neutralizes its capacity and resolve to take action. The so-called North-South division is of a very different character, and I sincerely hope that it will not be allowed to play a similar role in inhibiting the effectiveness of the United Nations. We have to admit that these divisions exist. And we must make all possible efforts to bridge them if we are, eventually, to overcome them. Obviously, this is one of the great roles of the Organization.

99. Above all, we must remember that the Organization, whatever its shortcomings, remains the world's best means of avoiding massive disasters in the future. It would be a tragedy if support for the United Nations were to be weakened because of its present difficulties and divisions. We must never forget, living as we do with the extreme perils of nuclear confrontation and of economic and social anarchy, that the United Nations was set up to provide an alternative to these nightmares. Because of the existence of the United Nations, we have a choice—to accept the present terrifying uncertainties and inequities and the privation and misery of a large segment of humanity, or to persevere in developing the better system which we know can be devised. The Charter is the blueprint for that system. To make it a reality will require courage, vision and an immense amount of hard work. But we cannot have any doubt as to which choice should be made.

100. Finally, I wish to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to all those with whom I have had the pleasure of working in the past 10 years. First of all, I want to thank the members of the Secretariat, all of them, who have worked hard and loyally in all the varied fields of our activity to execute the plans and the programmes of the United Nations. I am the first to understand that working in the Secretariat can be frustrating and, at times, discouraging. I therefore appreciate all the more the dedicated and loyal support which I have enjoyed during my time here from all staff members, and especially from the senior colleagues who have shared that great burden with me.

101. I wish also to express to the Permanent Representatives of the Member States—my dear colleagues and friends here in this Hall—my profound gratitude for all the co-operation and help I have received from them again and again, and sometimes in difficult situations. They carry a very special share of the workload of the Organization and are a tremendously important part of the working life of the Secretary-General. I have greatly valued their contribution—your contributions, distinguished representatives—and your friendship.

102. I wish particularly to pay a tribute to you, Mr. President, my former colleague in the Secretariat, and through you to the presiding officers of the main organs of the United Nations over the years. Your experience, wisdom and diplomatic talents have contributed greatly to the smooth running of this session. The presiding officers play a very significant part in the life of the Organization. Their conduct of its business can often, especially in times of trouble, be decisive in determining the success or failure of our efforts.

103. Last but not least, I wish to express to my successor and friend, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, my heartfelt and warmest good wishes for his success in this office. I felt encouraged by the congratulatory messages addressed by the representatives of the various regional groups a few moments ago to my distinguished successor. The new Secretary-General has been a close colleague and a dedicated worker in this house for many years. His integrity, judgement and diplomatic skill have already proved themselves. His outstanding personal qualities and long experience in the work of the Organization command respect in all parts of the world. I feel very confident and happy for the future in passing this, my great responsibility, on to him.

104. May I conclude by saying from the bottom of my heart how much I have cherished the opportunity to work for this great Organization. The United Nations is not just an institution, it is also a vision of a better future. Let us all—those who are staying here and those, like myself, who are departing from this house—dedicate ourselves to work, wherever we may be, to make that vision a reality.

105. The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank most sincerely the Secretary-General for the important statement he has just made.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.