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Press Release SG/339  
16 October 1953

UNITED NATIONS DAY MESSAGE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The 24 October is United Nations day. It has been set aside by the General Assembly for making known the aims and achievements of the United Nations. On this day in 1945 the United Nations Charter came into force as a statement of common aspirations and a code of conduct which the Member Nations agreed should guide them in their relationship with each other and the world at large.

The United Nations was not founded with any thought that by its mere establishment the dangers that beset our world would be banished or the conflicts brought to an end. The United Nations is an instrument to be used and developed by all who sincerely work for peace. It is a tool in the hands of the governments, needed in their efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts by peaceful negotiation and constructive cooperation. The United Nations is what the Member Nations make it, reflecting the weaknesses of all human effort but also the high aspirations and noble achievements of men of good will all over the world.

In the past eight years we find that the members of the United Nations have sometimes succeeded, sometimes been frustrated in their effort to promote and defend peace and well-being. But all through that period we find the influence of the United Nations being vigorously exerted, against the forces of fear and hate and destruction, for justice and progress.

In our efforts to establish for the future a world of peace and freedom we know that we have in the United Nations a new element offering new possibilities for success -- a new means of settling old problems and reducing tensions and, better still, of anticipating future problems and tensions in order to forestall dangers that otherwise might threaten. Where the methods of bilateral and regional negotiation prove insufficient, the alternative of a world forum now exists. The resort to force or the threat of force is forbidden by the Charter. In Korea the United Nations has shown that armed aggression can be repelled by collective action.

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Our world of today and our world of the future presents a picture in which the need for such a new approach as that embodied in the United Nations is only too apparent. New technical development has made all countries neighbours in a geographical sense. It has given us means of destruction far more terrible than those which have previously been at the disposal of anybody. The economic ties between different countries have become much closer than before. Thus, we face today a situation characterized by greatly increased international interdependence, rich in possibilities, but also fraught with dangers unknown to the world of yesterday. This is the world we must master. This is the world in which a new approach is necessary, from every single man and from the various governments, but also collectively. Our problem is how to use what man has created for the benefit of man instead of for his destruction. That problem can be resolved only by a joint effort in which all are willing to take their part and to carry their responsibility. That is the meaning of the United Nations for all peoples.

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