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THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA:  
THREATS TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE  
AND SECURITY AND PEACE  
INITIATIVES

SECURITY COUNCIL  
Forty-third year

Report by the Secretary-General

1. This report is being submitted in accordance with Security Council resolutions 530 (1983) of 19 May 1983 and 562 (1985) of 10 May 1985 and General Assembly resolution 42/1 of 7 October 1987.
2. In the latter resolution the General Assembly, after, inter alia, recognizing the decisive contribution of the Contadora Group and its Support Group in favour of peace in Central America, commended the desire for peace expressed by the Central American Presidents in signing on 7 August 1987 the agreement on the "Procedure for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in Central America"; expressed its firmest support for the agreement; called upon the Presidents to continue their efforts and requested the international community to lend its full support; and welcomed the acceptance by the Secretary-General of the invitation from the Central American countries to participate in the International Verification and Follow-up Commission set up at Caracas on 22 August 1987, and recognized the importance of the initiative taken by him jointly with the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States on 18 November 1986.
3. By the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to afford the fullest support to the Central American Governments in their effort to achieve peace, especially by granting the assistance requested of him for the effective functioning of the machinery for the verification and follow-up of the commitments made, which was provided for in the agreement signed at Guatemala City.

4. The General Assembly also urged the international community to increase technical, economic and financial assistance to the Central American countries and requested the Secretary-General to promote a special plan of co-operation for Central America.

5. General Assembly resolution 42/1, adopted two months after the signing of the Esquipulas II agreement (A/42/521-S/19085), reflected faithfully the international community's support for the decision taken by the Central American Presidents, in their awareness of their peoples' desire for peace, to take their destiny into their own hands and find solutions to the various problems facing them. The commitments entered into by the five Central American Governments at Esquipulas, and the emphasis placed on their simultaneous fulfilment, seemed to point the way to ending the vicious circle to which I referred in my 12 February 1987 report concerning internal democratization on the one hand and the principle of non-intervention and non-use of force on the other hand (A/42/127-S/18686).

6. In my desire to contribute to the peace process, I agreed to participate in the International Verification and Follow-up Commission, a decision that was later welcomed by the General Assembly. In conformity with section 10 of the Procedure, this Commission consisted of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) (or their representatives) and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Central America, the Contadora Group and the Support Group. In fulfilling its responsibilities, the International Commission worked hard during the five months of its functioning. It held five meetings attended by the above-mentioned participants: at Caracas on 22 August 1987; at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 28 September and 4 December 1987, both times at my invitation; at OAS headquarters in Washington, D.C., on 7 November 1987; and at Panama City on 13 and 14 January 1988; and four meetings attended by ad hoc representatives: at Managua on 17 and 18 September 1987; at Guatemala City on 8 and 9 October 1987; at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 2 and 3 December 1987; and at Panama City from 11 to 14 January 1988.

7. From the time it was established, the International Verification and Follow-up Commission took the view that on-site inspection, particularly with regard to the security commitments set forth in the Procedure, was a sine qua non for objective, independent and effective verification. Accordingly, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs serving on the Commission requested the two Secretaries-General to dispatch to the region a preliminary technical mission to evaluate the need for on-site inspection, in co-operation with the Central American Governments, and enable the Commission to specify its requirements in that regard. In October 1987 the joint United Nations/OAS mission visited the five Central American countries, and in November it undertook a second round of consultations with the representatives of the Central American Governments. In the two reports submitted to the Commission, the mission concluded that given the lack of unanimity among the five Central American Governments, the conditions did not exist for the establishment of practical mechanisms for on-site verification of the security commitments with regard to a cease-fire, non-use of territory to attack other States, and termination of aid for irregular forces and insurrectionist movements.

8. In accordance with the timetable in section 11 of the Procedure, the Commission, on 15 January 1988, submitted to the Central American Presidents meeting in Costa Rica a progress report on compliance with the agreements contained in the Procedure, on the basis of reports received from the Central American Governments, the National Reconciliation Commissions and other sources, and on the basis of information gathered by the ad hoc representatives during a visit to the five Central American countries between 4 and 10 January 1988.

9. In the Joint Declaration issued at Alajuela, Costa Rica, on 16 January 1988 at the end of the meeting of Central American Presidents (A/42/911-S/19447), the Presidents acknowledged the Commission's dedication and efforts in promoting compliance with the Esquipulas II agreements, and decided that in future the main function of the Executive Commission made up of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Central American States would be to verify, monitor and follow up all the commitments set forth in the Guatemala Procedure. 1/ To that end, the Executive Commission would secure "the co-operation of States of the region or from outside the region, or bodies of recognized impartiality and technical competence". The Executive Commission has held three meetings since January (in San Salvador on 16 and 17 February 1988, in Guatemala City on 23 and 24 March and 7 April 1988, and in Tegucigalpa on 22 June 1988). At the time that the present report was being submitted, no such co-operation had yet been formally requested.

10. Despite recent set-backs, there can be no doubt that in the months immediately following its signature, significant progress was made towards fulfilment of the commitments set forth in the Guatemala Procedure: the National Reconciliation Commissions were established in each country, albeit with varying degrees of representativeness and varying functions; amnesty decrees were issued, although not all of them fostered open political activity, as was apparently required under the Procedure; in countries where states of siege or emergency existed, they were lifted; relatively firm measures were taken to expand or strengthen political pluralism; and specific action was taken to arrange a cessation of hostilities in countries where hostilities were taking place. More recently, the Treaty establishing the Central American Parliament was signed; it has been ratified by four of the five legislative organs.

11. On the other hand, there has been an apparent lack of similar progress towards fulfilment of the commitments on non-use of territory to attack other States and on termination of aid for irregular forces and insurrectionist movements. The lack of progress towards compliance with those obligations not only has affected the simultaneous fulfilment of the commitments embodied in the agreement, but also has undermined the Esquipulas II strategy aimed at bringing about the cessation of hostilities on the basis of a broad amnesty and democratization, in conjunction with the termination of aid for irregular forces and insurrectionist movements, and non-use of territory to attack other States. It seems that since the Alajuela Declaration was issued, the principle of simultaneity has been replaced by the principle of unilateralism; but it is difficult to imagine how in practice the principle of reciprocity in the fulfilment of the commitments could cease to apply.

12. The Central American Governments must renew the momentum of their efforts to overcome the obstacles now before them, and the countries outside the region with ties and interests in it must resolutely decide to facilitate that task and refrain from any action likely to undermine it. In that connection, I should like to emphasize the continued interest and willingness to help of the member countries of the Contadora and Support Groups, as reflected in the communiqué issued by their Ministers for Foreign Affairs at the close of the meetings held at Cartagena on 26 February 1988 (A/42/927-S/19560) and at Mexico City on 27 June 1988. I am also gratified by the success of the fourth Conference between the European Community and its member States and the countries of Central America and of the Contadora Group (San Jose IV) held at Hamburg on 29 February and 1 March 1988 (A/43/258-S/19691).

13. In the course of the past year, I personally had occasion to discuss the situation in the region with the Presidents of Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Venezuela and with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Representatives of the Central American countries, as well as with the Contadora and Support Groups.

14. The tragic situation of the Central American refugees continues to be a matter of grave concern. While implementation of the peace plan would presumably create conditions favourable for the solution of that painful problem, I am gratified that concrete measures have already been taken to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of the refugees, which has in some instances begun with the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In particular, I should like to emphasize the decision adopted in San Salvador in September of this year by the Governments of Central America and Mexico to convene an international conference on Central American refugees to be held in Guatemala City in May 1989 for the purpose of finding practical solutions to the problem of refugees, displaced persons and returnees on a purely humanitarian and a political basis.

15. I have repeatedly expressed my conviction that the root of the Central American crisis is to be found in the unjust economic and social structures which have traditionally characterized the region, exacerbated by the current economic recession. That is why I noted with satisfaction that the Guatemala Procedure includes a commitment to strengthen democracy by creating "a system of economic and social well-being and justice" and to jointly seek special economic assistance from the international community. Accordingly in response to resolutions 42/1 of 7 October 1987 and 42/204 of 11 December 1987, I prepared a special plan of co-operation for Central America which was discussed by the General Assembly and of which it took note in its resolution 42/231 of 12 May 1988.

16. There are few international conflicts in which the interaction between peace and development is as evident as it is in the Central American conflict. Not only has economic development been adversely affected by the political turmoil in the region, but the economic crisis is perpetuating the unjust socio-economic structures and prolonging internal conflicts, thus frustrating efforts to arrive at a consensus concerning the socio-political model for the Central American societies. Without such a consensus, it is very difficult, even in countries with

a long democratic tradition, to establish a solid foundation for a participatory and pluralistic society.

17. At this juncture, when other conflicts seem to be on the way to solution, I should like to appeal to the Central American countries and other countries to renew their collective commitment to peace in the region. I am prepared to provide all the support they may request for the fulfilment of that objective.

Notes

1/ Under section 11 of the Guatemala Procedure, the chief function of the Executive Commission was "to regulate, encourage and facilitate" compliance with the agreements contained in the Agreement.

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