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THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Note by the Secretary-General

1. Since the Security Council adopted resolution 530 (1983), on 19 May 1983, I have endeavoured to keep in contact with the Governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, as well as with the Governments of Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela, which comprise the Contadora Group, in order to keep informed of the efforts made to find a negotiated political solution to the problems in the Central American region and of the developments in the area. On two occasions, on 28 June and 13 July 1983, I reported orally on the situation to the members of the Council.
2. Within the framework of the Declaration adopted at Isla de Contadora on 9 January 1983, 1/ there was an initial phase of official contacts and visits by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Contadora Group to the countries directly concerned, on 12 and 13 April. 2/ As a result of the consultations held, it was agreed to initiate a new phase of joint meetings of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the five Central American countries. The first three meetings were held in Panama City on 20 and 21 April, 2/ from 28 to 30 May 3/ and from 28 to 30 July 1983, 4/ respectively.
3. On 17 July 1983, the Presidents of Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela met in Cancún, Mexico. The Declaration issued on that occasion proposed guidelines for the negotiating process as well as specific commitments the implementation of which would ensure peace in the region. 5/
4. On the basis of the Cancún Declaration, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Contadora Group and of the five Central American countries met again in Panama City, from 7 to 9 September 1983, and adopted a Document of Objectives. 6/ On 6 October, I received a visit from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico and the Permanent Representatives of Colombia, Panama and Venezuela to the United Nations, who handed me the Document, which, I was informed, had been approved by the Heads of State of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and

* Second reissue for technical reasons.

Nicaragua. 7/ At the request of the Contadora Group, the Document is transmitted to the Security Council as an annex to this note.

5. On that occasion, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico pointed out that the Document of Objectives is a single consensus text, which sets out the positions and the concerns of the Governments directly concerned and the proposals of the Contadora Group, and which contains the principles on which the eventual solution of the Central American problems will have to be based. The Document also contains a definition of the specific areas of negotiation and the terms of reference for the formulation of the legal instruments and the machinery which would be essential in order to ensure harmonious coexistence in the region. I expressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico my fervent hope that the Group's activities would soon achieve substantive and concrete results. I also emphasized on that occasion that any attempt at a solution should take into account the profound economic and social imbalances with which the Central American peoples have always struggled.

6. In transmitting the Document of Objectives to the Security Council, I consider it my duty to express my profound concern at the grave and prolonged tension which persists in the area. In view of the nature and possible ramifications of the convulsive situation currently prevailing in the Central American region, the unavoidable conclusion is that it threatens international peace and security.

7. In communications addressed to the President of the Council and to the Secretary-General, there have been frequent accusations and counteraccusations of foreign interference in the region and complaints of numerous border incidents as well as incursions by sea and by air, causing deplorable loss of life and material damage. 8/ In the view of some Governments, the military and naval manoeuvres now in progress add to tensions in the region. It has also been pointed out that the presence of military advisers and training centres, the traffic in arms and the activities of armed groups, and the unprecedented build-up of arms and of military and paramilitary forces constitute further factors of tension. On 13 September, the Security Council met at the urgent request of a Government of the region, which complained of what it described as a further escalation of acts of aggression against its country. 9/ Although the Secretary-General has no way of reliably verifying each and every one of the components of this situation and is therefore unable to make definite judgements, there is no doubt that an alarming picture is emerging in the area.

8. The five Governments of Central America have assured me on a number of occasions of their firm commitment to contribute in good faith to the search for peaceful solutions. In that connection, they have also reiterated their determination to co-operate with the Governments of the Contadora Group in their efforts for peace. The Governments of Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela are motivated by an earnest desire to find solutions adapted to the realities of the region, without any intrusion derived from the East-West conflict. That is why they have the manifest support of the international community as a whole.

9. In accordance with the terms of resolution 530 (1983), I shall continue to keep the Council informed as and when necessary.

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Notes

1/ A/38/68.

2/ S/15727.

3/ S/15809.

4/ S/15900.

5/ S/15877.

6/ S/15982.

7/ The texts of the communications from the Governments of Nicaragua and Honduras on this subject were circulated to the Security Council as documents S/16006 and S/16021 respectively.

8/ Documents S/15780, S/15787, S/15806, S/15808, S/15813, S/15816, S/15817, S/15835, S/15836, S/15837, S/15838, S/15839, S/15840, S/15855, S/15857, S/15858, S/15879, S/15893, S/15899, S/15930, S/15952, S/15973, S/15979, S/15980, S/15986, S/15993, S/15995, S/16007, S/16011, S/16012, S/16013, S/16016, S/16018, S/16020, S/16022, S/16024, S/16025, S/16026, S/16030, S/16031, S/16032.

9/ Document S/PV.2477.

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Annex

Document of Objectives

Considering:

The situation prevailing in Central America, which is characterized by an atmosphere of tension that threatens security and peaceful coexistence in the region, and which requires, for its solution, observance of the principles of international law governing the actions of States, especially:

The self-determination of peoples;

Non-intervention;

The sovereign equality of States;

The peaceful settlement of disputes;

Refraining from the threat or use of force;

Respect for the territorial integrity of States;

Pluralism in its various manifestations;

Full support for democratic institutions;

The promotion of social justice;

International co-operation for development;

Respect for and promotion of human rights;

The prohibition of terrorism and subversion;

The desire to reconstruct the Central American homeland through progressive integration of its economic, legal and social institutions;

The need for economic co-operation among the States of Central America so as to make a fundamental contribution to the development of their peoples and the strengthening of their independence;

The undertaking to establish, promote or revitalize representative, democratic systems in all the countries of the region;

The unjust economic, social and political structures which exacerbate the conflicts in Central America;

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The urgent need to put an end to the tensions and lay the foundations for understanding and solidarity among the countries of the area;

The arms race and the growing arms traffic in Central America, which aggravate political relations in the region and divert economic resources that could be used for development;

The presence of foreign advisers and other forms of foreign military interference in the zone;

The risks that the territory of Central American States may be used for the purpose of conducting military operations and pursuing policies of destabilization against others,

The need for concerted political efforts in order to encourage dialogue and understanding in Central America, avert the danger of a general spreading of the conflicts, and set in motion the machinery needed to ensure the peaceful coexistence and security of their peoples;

Declare their intention of achieving the following objectives:

To promote détente and put an end to situations of conflict in the area, refraining from taking any action that might jeopardize political confidence or prevent the achievement of peace, security and stability in the region;

To ensure strict compliance with the aforementioned principles of international law, whose violators will be held accountable;

To respect and ensure the exercise of human, political, civil, economic, social, religious and cultural rights;

To adopt measures conducive to the establishment and, where appropriate, improvement of democratic, representative and pluralistic systems that will guarantee effective popular participation in the decision-making process and ensure that the various currents of opinion have free access to fair and regular elections based on the full observance of citizens' rights;

To promote national reconciliation efforts wherever deep divisions have taken place within society, with a view to fostering participation in democratic political processes in accordance with the law;

To create political conditions intended to ensure the international security, integrity and sovereignty of the States of the region;

To stop the arms race in all its forms and begin negotiations for the control and reduction of current stocks of weapons and on the number of armed troops;

To prevent the installation on their territory of foreign military bases or any other type of foreign military interference;

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To conclude agreements to reduce the presence of foreign military advisers and other foreign elements involved in military and security activities, with a view to their elimination;

To establish internal control machinery to prevent the traffic in arms from the territory of any country in the region to the territory of another;

To eliminate the traffic in arms, whether within the region or from outside it, intended for persons, organizations or groups seeking to destabilize the Governments of Central American countries;

To prevent the use of their own territory by persons, organizations or groups seeking to destabilize the Governments of Central American countries and to refuse to provide them with or permit them to receive military or logistical support;

To refrain from inciting or supporting acts of terrorism, subversion or sabotage in the countries in the area;

To establish and co-ordinate direct communication systems with a view to preventing or, where appropriate, settling incidents between States of the region;

To continue humanitarian aid aimed at helping Central American refugees who have been displaced from their countries of origin, and to create suitable conditions for the voluntary repatriation of such refugees, in consultation with or with the co-operation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international agencies deemed appropriate;

To undertake economic and social development programmes with the aim of promoting well being and an equitable distribution of wealth;

To revitalize and restore economic integration machinery in order to attain sustained development on the basis of solidarity and mutual advantage;

To negotiate the provision of external monetary resources which will provide additional means of financing the resumption of intra-regional trade, meet the serious balance-of-payments problems, attract funds for working capital, support programmes to extend and restructure production systems and promote medium- and long-term investment projects;

To negotiate better and broader access to international markets in order to increase the volume of trade between the countries of Central America and the rest of the world, particularly the industrialized countries; by means of a revision of trade practices, the elimination of tariff and other barriers, and the achievement of price stability at a profitable and fair level for the products exported by the countries of the region;

To establish technical co-operation machinery for the planning, programming and implementation of multi-sectoral investment and trade promotion projects.

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The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Central American countries, with the participation of the countries in the Contadora Group, have begun negotiations with the aim of preparing for the conclusion of the agreements and the establishment of the machinery necessary to formalize and develop the objectives contained in this document, and to bring about the establishment of appropriate verification and monitoring systems. To that end, account will be taken of the initiatives put forward at the meetings convened by the Contadora Group.

Panama City, 9 September 1983
