



INTRODUCTION
TO THE
REPORT
OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ON THE
WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION

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I

In the nearly five years that I have been Secretary-General, the United Nations has passed through a period in which considerable achievement has been mingled with frustration. It has shown its capacity to act in critical situations, as for example in the Middle East war of 1973. It has also experienced, in some other dangerous situations, the frustration of being unable to generate the necessary will and consensus to take action. Confrontations, reflecting the deep differences among the nations of the world, cannot always be avoided; yet, through the United Nations, confrontation may lead to serious and far-reaching efforts to discuss those differences and to develop common ground for future co-operation in tackling important world problems.

We live in a transitional period when the undoubted fact of increasing interdependence has by no means decreased the power or the prevalence of the concept of national sovereignty. During the past 30 years the number of sovereign States in the world has tripled. Thus, in the United Nations, we have to try to build a structure of peace and to evolve a more equitable economic order within an organization where national concerns and aspirations remain dominant. We have to try to develop the politics of world order in a world where military and economic strength are still dominating realities. We have to develop an instrument of international co-operation capable of moulding and integrating the national policies of nearly 150 sovereign States.

Are these objectives attainable? The short answer is that they must be. The destructive potential both of armaments and of uncontrolled science and technology is a factor which we continue to ignore at humanity's peril. The persistence of widespread and grinding poverty is a sure recipe for unceasing political instability. The international community must develop the collective capacity to meet such challenges.

There is now emerging a world agenda of priority global items on which it is increasingly understood that we must co-operate or run the gravest risks—if not perish. Moreover, we now have a world of independent sovereign States where the classic relationship of the domination of the many by the few is beginning to be a thing of the past. The possibility of a sensible, equal and constructive dialogue on political and economic matters among all States, developed and developing, now exists as never before. These are positive trends in which the United Nations has played an important part. Its future effectiveness and growth will depend on whether these trends can be maintained and strengthened.

It is essential, however, not to underestimate the risk of unexpected developments in international relations

which can quickly turn an apparently promising situation into a desperate struggle to avert a disastrous conflict. Nor can we ignore the undoubted fact that reason, far-sightedness and logic do not always play a commanding role in international affairs. If we are to build the positive trends I have mentioned into a new and better world order, it will be through unremitting and sometimes frustrating effort, through restraint and understanding as well as through imaginative and creative thinking.

The fact that there are no easy solutions to the world's problems must not be allowed to generate defeatism or a cynical attitude to international co-operation. Our efforts to make the United Nations work will inevitably contain a measure both of hope and of frustration, of achievement and of failure. In the long run only the dedication of the Members to the ideals and objectives of the Charter, and their persistence in working to realize those ideals and objectives in spite of setbacks and disappointments, will be the decisive factor in the success or failure of this great experiment.

In these last years I have learnt to appreciate the extraordinary range, variety, and sometimes the unexpectedness, of the Organization's activities, the great possibilities as well as the obstacles which it confronts, and the wealth of human talent and dedication which is to be found among the national representatives and international civil servants who work in the United Nations system. The Secretary-Generalship is certainly one of the most fascinating, and at the same time one of the most frustrating, jobs in the world. It offers every day both harsh reminders of the world as it really is, and tantalizing glimpses of what it could be. Only the vision of a better world, a world of peace, justice and progress for all, can sustain us in the daily struggle to meet the dangers, the challenges and the great problems of our time. I am more convinced than ever that our greatest danger will come if we lose that vision and relapse into defeatism and cynicism.

II

Today the direction and the broad outline of the future have become clearer. The near completion of the process of decolonization has, in the space of one generation, transformed the geo-political map of the world and given us an international community of independent States seeking to maintain their freedom and to develop their destiny as sovereign and equal Members of the United Nations. It is impossible to underestimate the importance of such a fundamental historic change and its implications for the world order which the Governments and the peoples of the world are seeking to build in the United Nations.

It is obvious that such a fundamental development will inevitably, in its initial stages, be accompanied by

difficulties, frictions and readjustments, which may in some cases be painful. I believe that the role of the United Nations as a catalyst in this process and as an agent of peaceful change will prove to have been of the highest historical importance, although in the short term such a role will not necessarily be universally popular.

The world Organization articulates and symbolizes the great changes now taking place. Some critics have even maintained that the United Nations exacerbates differences and creates confrontations, thereby making the process of change more difficult. I strongly doubt whether the process of change and evolution would have been easier and less painful without the public discussions of problems and the opportunities for discreet and confidential contacts which the United Nations affords to the world community. I believe that a frank, continuous and well-informed debate on the main issues of our time is indispensable to international understanding and to future co-operation.

In recent years the emphasis and focus of attention in the United Nations has changed significantly. In its early years the dominant influence in the Organization's affairs was the tense relationship of the greatest Powers, especially the East-West relationship. Persistent efforts to reduce the causes of tension among the great Powers and to achieve some kind of *modus vivendi* have, in the past few years, made this theme less dominant, and in the meantime the emergence of the developing nations as an articulate group with strong interests of their own has introduced a powerful new element into the work of the United Nations. Although East-West problems persist in many fields, the North-South relationship is in one form or another increasingly the basic theme of our debates. We have seen the inception of the historically vital debate on a new economic order and the beginnings of a constructive dialogue on a wide range of matters of common interest between the developed and the developing worlds.

In noting this shift in emphasis, I do not mean to imply that the problems of the relationship of the greatest Powers are by any means solved—far from it. The slowness of progress in the vital field of disarmament is a constant reminder of how much more improvement is needed. However, the "balance of prudence", the evident decline in the readiness of great Powers to confront each other, which I mentioned in the introduction to my first report in 1972, has unquestionably influenced the conduct of the affairs of the international community as a whole.

Logically, this development might seem to point to a wider use of the potential of the United Nations as an instrument for dealing with international disputes and for keeping the peace. Although recourse has been made to the Security Council on a number of important issues in the past five years and the Council has continued to be closely concerned with certain long-standing disputes, we are in practice still far from the ideal of an authoritative Security Council playing the primary role in matters of international peace and security, which was envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations.

Another important trend has been the increasing willingness of the international community to tackle so-called global problems through the United Nations. Pioneering international conferences have been held on the environment, population, industrialization, food, the status of women, the law of the sea, trade and de-

velopment and, most recently, human settlements. Such conferences, while they do not, of course, provide immediate solutions to the problems that they deal with, have a very considerable effect in focusing public interest on these problems, in preparing a climate of opinion favourable to their solution, and in evolving guidelines for future international and national action. It remains to be seen whether the international community is capable of following up these very important initiatives by practical programmes of concerted action.

Of all the attempts to tackle global problems, the debate which began at the sixth special session of the General Assembly, and continued at the seventh, is the most ambitious. The concept of a new international economic order concerns a range of activities of fundamental interest and importance to virtually every Government and people on earth. The problems include the complex legacy of history, the new expectations and aspirations of the developing world, a more equitable and far-sighted use of the world's primary resources and the inevitable conflicts of interest that must come to the surface in a period of transition. I shall revert to this subject later in this introduction.

The general trends which I have mentioned are important in themselves. They also have important implications for the future of the United Nations. If followed to their logical conclusions, they all, in one way or another, point to a more comprehensive and consistent utilization of the United Nations system as the basis for international co-operation in the development of human society.

III

Five years ago a major focus of international attention and concern was the situation in the South Asian subcontinent. On the humanitarian side, the United Nations was able to be of considerable assistance in dealing with the enormous problems which had arisen, especially in Bangladesh, in the aftermath of the events of 1971. On the political side, the over-all picture in South Asia as a whole begins to look more encouraging and a spirit of greater understanding and co-operation seems to be emerging. While outstanding issues remain, if the momentum of this welcome development is used to find mutually satisfactory solutions, we may indeed hope that the area will enter into a new and brighter period.

Another situation which was the cause of great concern in the international community at that time was the war in Indo-China. Although my predecessor and I made various efforts to be of assistance in bringing an end to the bloodshed and destruction, the United Nations was never formally involved in the search for a solution. The end of that war more than a year ago opened the door to a new and more peaceful future in the region itself and to the development of more stable international relations among all the Governments concerned. The United Nations system has been involved in giving humanitarian help to all the peoples of Indo-China, and I have also reported to the membership on the basic requirements of Viet Nam for rehabilitation and reconstruction.

In the process of decolonization the gaining of independence by Angola, Cape Verde, the Comoros, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles and Surinam is a highly important development. This positive development, however, also serves

to highlight the outstanding problems of southern Africa. These problems have for many years been central preoccupations of the United Nations and will continue to be so until a satisfactory solution is found. The persistence and repercussions of these problems in Africa and in a wider sphere create a serious potential threat to international peace and security. It is impossible to over-emphasize the need for urgent progress in this region of the world. Even now it may be very late for peaceful solutions. With every month that passes the likelihood of interracial violence on a large scale becomes greater.

In Southern Rhodesia the alternative is a negotiated and orderly, but speedy, transition to majority rule, but this is an option which may not remain available much longer. I earnestly hope that it will be taken up while there is still time. Meanwhile we must continue our efforts to assist Zambia and Mozambique to meet the great sacrifices incurred in closing their borders with Southern Rhodesia in response to the decisions of the Security Council.

The situation in Namibia is of particular concern to the United Nations because it has assumed responsibility for leading the Territory and its people to independence. Failure to make progress up to now has already led to more pronounced resistance and armed clashes. The proposals recently communicated to the United Nations by the Government of South Africa will be studied by the Security Council. I feel obliged to say, however, that it is a matter of regret that these proposals fall far short of the essential conditions stipulated by the United Nations and do not, therefore, constitute an adequate response to the needs of the situation. At this late hour it is essential that South Africa co-operate fully with the United Nations in resolving this matter to the satisfaction of the people of Namibia and of the international community.

In South Africa, the world has now seen the tragic consequences which flow from the abhorrent policy of *apartheid*. The disturbances earlier this year in which hundreds of innocent people were killed or injured, and more recent and continuing clashes, again dramatically demonstrate that *apartheid* is a policy which inevitably leads to violence. As long as it is practised, it will be resisted by those whose basic human rights are denied.

There can be no peace in southern Africa until the necessary changes, so long called for by the United Nations, come about. We can no longer afford delay, as the potential for major disaster becomes more real every day.

During the last year we have been faced with some special problems of the decolonization process. The problem of Western Sahara is one of these. In the rapidly evolving circumstances in Western Sahara, it was obviously desirable to defuse the situation and to find ways to render all possible assistance in the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its thirtieth session. In January 1976, therefore, I appointed a Special Representative who undertook an exploratory mission in the region. For reasons which are well known this mission could not be concluded. In these circumstances, I resumed my consultations with the parties concerned and interested, with a view to clarifying the situation and to decreasing the tension. However, further developments, and the subsequent actions of some of the parties, finally precluded further initiatives by me.

Another such problem has arisen concerning the exercise of the right of self-determination by the people of East Timor in keeping with the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. My Special Representative held consultations with the parties concerned but could not visit the whole territory. Under the circumstances it was not possible for him to assess accurately the prevailing situation. I informed the Security Council of these developments. Subsequently the communication addressed to me by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia regarding the integration of the territory into Indonesia was circulated as a document of the Security Council.

Two major and long-standing problems, the Middle East and Cyprus, continue to cause grave anxiety. In both cases frustration and bitterness, due in large measure to the lack of progress in reaching a peaceful and just settlement, led to the outbreak of serious hostilities in 1973 and 1974, respectively. In addition to inflicting great sufferings and hardship on the populations of these areas, the hostilities in both cases have had serious implications for the wider peace. In the two cases United Nations peace-keeping forces are involved and, in spite of their limited capacity, have been a major element in restoring quiet and in keeping the peace. In the Middle East and Cyprus the United Nations has been involved in efforts to resume negotiations and to make progress towards a lasting settlement. A number of important bilateral initiatives have also been taken in this connexion. In both cases the attempt to negotiate a settlement has encountered grave obstacles but is, none the less, continuing. In both cases the internal politics of the countries concerned are an important factor in narrowing the options of the negotiating process.

There can be no question that the involvement of the United Nations is an indispensable factor in containing these deep-seated and very complex problems within reasonable bounds while a solution is sought. I have no doubt, therefore, that the great amount of time, effort and resources involved in trying to deal with them is completely justified. Both of these problems have implications far outside the immediate areas concerned and involve the delicate balance of relations between a number of other States as well as geopolitical factors of major importance. It is for that reason that they occupy such a prominent place on the agenda of the world Organization and that the effort to find peaceful solutions must be persisted in at all costs.

Although efforts to resume the negotiating process in the Middle East are, in the present circumstances, in abeyance, it is vital that they should be resumed in earnest as soon as the conditions in the region provide an opening for renewed negotiations. In Cyprus, after five rounds of intercommunal talks under my auspices, I and my Special Representative in the island are continuing our contacts with all parties concerned with a view to establishing the basis for a constructive and meaningful further round of negotiations.

The Palestinian dimension of the Middle East problem has gained increasing attention in efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in that region. This was particularly the case when, for the first time, the Security Council in January examined the matter in all its aspects. The General Assembly has also established a Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the report of which is to be considered by the Assembly at its thirty-first session. Without prejudicing the outcome of the debate in the

Assembly, I would like to underline once again the fundamental importance of tackling the Palestinian question as an essential element in resolving the Middle East dispute.

Civil war for more than a year has brought tragedy and destruction to Lebanon. Although this is primarily a domestic situation, outside involvement of many kinds is evident in Lebanon. In the face of the terrible complexities of the situation, it has proved impossible to make effective the many cease-fires which have been declared and thereby to create the conditions under which the process of national reconciliation can start in earnest. The relationship of the Lebanese crisis to the Middle East problem as a whole underlines its serious potential threat to international peace.

In the light of all these considerations I have, during the past year, made a number of appeals to the Lebanese authorities and people and have also brought the Lebanese crisis to the attention of the members of the Security Council. In recent months the League of Arab States has also made intensive efforts to bring about a cease-fire and the reconciliation of the opposing parties.

In spite of these efforts, the Lebanese tragedy continues in all its horror and violence, and the best efforts and intentions of the leaders concerned and of the international community appear unavailing in the face of the violent passions involved. This continuing disaster, with its frightening international implications, provides an agonizing example of the gap between our desire for peace and our practical capacity to achieve it. I should mention in this connexion that, in spite of the difficulties created by the present situation in Lebanon, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization has been able to continue its important task of observing the cease-fire in the Israel-Lebanon sector.

From the outset attempts to meet the humanitarian needs of the severely affected Lebanese population have been frustrated by conditions of almost total insecurity. The international community will be faced with a monumental challenge when the situation permits the resumption of humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction of the society and economy of Lebanon.

The above summary of a few of the more significant conflict issues of the past few years indicates that, while progress has been made with some, others have remained intractable and therefore continue to be of major concern. Clearly some international problems are not soluble within a short time span. In such cases I believe that the activity of the United Nations in considering them exhaustively, in containing them by peace-keeping, in trying to relieve the frustrations caused by them and in persisting in the search for peaceful solutions, plays an essential role in preventing escalation into a wider conflict. Quiet diplomacy through the United Nations can sometimes also avoid major and immediate dangers, thus contributing to the search for lasting settlements.

IV

I shall not repeat what I said in my introduction last year about the ways in which we should seek to improve the peace-keeping and peace-making capacity of the United Nations. While we cannot ignore the political realities of our time and the limitations which they impose on the instrumentalities created by the Charter, and especially on the Security Council, it is essential

that the authority of the Council and the respect of Governments and peoples for it should be upheld.

The Charter is clear as to the primary role of the Security Council in matters of peace and security and the respect which is due to its decisions. While it is a fact that the enforcement aspect of the Security Council's functions has never become a full political reality, it should not be accepted that the Council's decisions can be ignored when they do not happen to suit the immediate purposes of one or another Government. If this were to be generally conceded, the already tenuous role of reason and justice in our affairs would disappear and we should return to the age of "might is right", a concept even more dangerous than before because of the destructive potential, multiplicity and volume of armaments which now exist in almost all parts of the world. The matter is clearly stated in paragraphs 3 and 4 of Article 2 of the Charter, which call upon Member States to settle their disputes by peaceful means, and to refrain from the threat or use of force in their international relations.

The Charter concept of world order is based on respect for the decisions of the principal organs of the United Nations and for international law, principles and procedures. If these are ignored, the system of the Charter for maintaining international peace and security, born of the agonies of the Second World War, will inevitably become a hollow shell which will have little utility when it is needed most—when world peace is seriously threatened. We have had many recent experiences of the wide discrepancy between the unanimity, or near unanimity, of decisions of the Security Council or the General Assembly and the practical effect which such decisions have on the issues to which they are addressed. This is a development which, if allowed to continue, will sooner or later once again put in jeopardy the security of the world community as a whole. It is therefore in the interests of all Governments, even at the cost of some short-term disadvantages, to support and respect the authority of the Security Council and to contribute to its central role in developing a system of world order. With all the limitations imposed by circumstances, the record of the Security Council in reaching decisions on difficult and vital questions is a constructive one. There exists, unfortunately, a strong contrast between that record and the record of implementation of the Council's decisions. The responsibilities of Governments do not cease when a resolution is adopted; indeed resolutions usually require determined action by Governments, in addition to the parties directly concerned, if they are to be translated into reality. I speak with strong feelings on this matter because the Secretary-General is in a sense the custodian of the decisions of the United Nations. All too often he is called upon to implement them only to find himself with the most limited possibilities of doing so effectively.

I hope that Member States will consider very seriously how the trends which I have mentioned can be reversed. How can we move towards a system of world order based on collective responsibility and away from the anarchic attitude which is implied by a disregard, whenever it seems convenient, for the carefully expressed decisions of the Security Council? If the latter trend persists, the risk of war is ever present and the dangers of a fatal escalation are very real. It is vital, therefore, that the improvement of the peace-keeping and peace-making capacity of our Organization should

have the highest priority on its agenda and among the concerns of Governments.

V

Any significant advance towards a system of world order based on collective responsibility will depend upon a degree of disarmament and upon a climate of confidence, both of which are lacking today. The problem of disarmament in all its aspects, therefore, remains of the highest and most urgent importance.

In my introduction to my report last year, I dwelt at some length on this problem and suggested that the General Assembly should consider a basic review of the role of the United Nations in disarmament. I also indicated a number of areas in which I felt that the role of the United Nations might be strengthened, including an improvement in the quantity and quality of information available to Member States and to the public.

It is essential that public opinion in the world should be actively aware of the dangers of present developments in the armaments field and should not adopt a defeatist or fatalistic attitude in the face of the appalling reality of the arms race. Mobilized public opinion has shown itself increasingly effective on a number of important issues in recent years. It seems to me that it is time that world public opinion became far more actively involved in the struggle for disarmament, which may well be a struggle for nothing less than human survival.

I would therefore suggest that the General Assembly might discuss various ways in which public concern about disarmament could be stimulated and channelled in constructive ways. In the light of its universal character and its recent experience of focusing world public opinion on important global subjects, the United Nations may well be able to play a major role in generating a new approach to this most dangerous of all problems. One such approach lies in the proposal endorsed by the non-aligned countries to convene a special session of the General Assembly on disarmament.

Unfortunately, my general remarks of last year on the lack of progress in disarmament still apply. We still live in the shadow of the nuclear as well as the conventional arms race. Nuclear disarmament remains therefore the first priority. Scientific and technical development in the nuclear energy field has now advanced to a stage where widespread use of nuclear power in all its ramifications is rapidly becoming a reality of the present rather than just a prospect for the future. In this situation, where the danger of nuclear proliferation has increased, it is essential that suppliers and receivers of nuclear installations apply the requisite rules to prevent a proliferation of nuclear weapons technology.

The arms build-up in many particularly sensitive areas of the world has continued. I do not wish to repeat what I stated last year, except to say that in almost all respects the problem of armaments continues to present the most serious threat to a peaceful and orderly future for the world community, as well as a tremendous drain on resources urgently required for other purposes. I make no apology for restating here the eloquent fact that, while the world spends approximately \$300 billion a year on armaments, the net flow of official development assistance amounts to some \$15 billion a year. Resources devoted to the arms race since the end of the Second World War have exceeded \$6,000 billion, which is roughly equivalent to the 1976 gross national product of the entire world.

Disarmament in all its aspects involves the most sensitive questions of national security and international confidence. Therefore a more comprehensive and urgent approach is desperately needed if real progress is to be made. I hope that the United Nations will take its natural place in this effort.

VI

Recent events have dramatically underscored the urgent need for the world community to find effective ways of dealing with acts of international terrorism. Four years ago, I urged the General Assembly to develop measures in this regard. In doing so I made it clear that I had no intention of affecting principles enunciated by the General Assembly regarding colonial and dependent peoples seeking independence, and the Assembly, in inscribing the appropriate item on its agenda, referred to the underlying causes of certain forms of terrorism. I noted at that time that if such measures were not adopted the climate of fear, already a feature of our times, would inevitably become worse.

Both the Security Council, in its decision of 20 June 1972, and the General Assembly, in its resolution 3034 (XXVII) of 18 December 1972, stressed the necessity of devising measures to put an end to acts of international terrorism. A number of other steps have been taken in the past few years to deal with this problem, notably the adoption of the Hague Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft and the Montreal Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation and the elaboration of the Standards and Practices Governing Airport Security and Aircraft Safety recommended by the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that additional action is urgently needed if this phenomenon is to be effectively curbed. The time has come for a new and determined approach by the international community to a problem which is now generally recognized as a threat to the fabric of organized society and a potential danger to all Governments and peoples. I hope that serious attention will be given to this problem and that the General Assembly will take steps to develop commonly agreed rules so that we may be spared a repetition of the human tragedies of the past.

VII

Much attention has been given over the years to the organization and functioning of the United Nations system. If this were simply a matter of searching for the most effective table of organization or prescribing the simplest and most expeditious way of doing business, it would be relatively easy to expand the capacity and improve the procedures of our Organization. The fact, however, is that in the United Nations, as in many political organizations, almost every aspect of organization, administration and procedure has a dominant political side. It is therefore one thing to call for efficiency and streamlining, but quite another to put them into effect in the political context within which we live and operate.

I have no doubt that all Member States firmly desire the United Nations to serve as an instrument for international co-operation. In particular cases, however, there is a tendency for recriminations to outweigh the function of co-operation. While recognizing that the United Nations is fundamentally a political organization, I believe that serious efforts should be made to prevent

antagonisms or particular contentious issues from dominating the proceedings of the Organization to the point of jeopardizing long-term constructive work.

A second and related problem is the balance between short-term and long-term interests. The Charter itself sets out a number of long-term objectives, and the General Assembly and other organs continue every year to establish goals and principles for the solution of important problems. All too often, however, when the time comes to examine these goals and the means by which they can best be attained, the demands of short-term interests slow, or even halt, progress towards the long-term goal. It may be said that this is human nature and should not be surprising, but the question arises how long we can afford to indulge this aspect of human nature on some of the world's most vital and challenging problems. Technological developments have resulted in a cumulative and accelerated rate of change which can all too easily lead us into very deep waters before we realize what is happening. Time, in the technological age, is definitely not on our side, and the magnitude and fundamental nature of some of the changes involved require that we develop new habits of co-operation, discipline and, if necessary, the readiness to sacrifice some short-term interests.

The question of the law of the sea, for example, obviously demands early and comprehensive international agreements. If these are not reached soon, we know that irreversible developments are likely to take place, which may put beyond our reach forever the possibility of establishing a régime of the seas which will protect the oceans as a legacy for future generations of all mankind. Such a failure will also certainly sow a new crop of contentious international issues for the future.

Concern for good organization, efficiency and improved procedures must obviously be matched by the necessary restraint and the effort to achieve a reasonable balance between short-term political factors and considerations of the long-term general interest. The achievement of this balance is vitally necessary to the development of the United Nations.

VIII

On a more practical level, the General Assembly will certainly wish to continue its search for more efficient procedures and more effective approaches to the great problems of our time.

Five years ago, the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly submitted a number of recommendations, which were approved by the Assembly at its twenty-sixth session. Some of them were incorporated in the rules of procedure; others were annexed to the rules.

It is gratifying to note that the constructive work of the Special Committee has brought about a number of fruitful results. Measures such as the issuance of a preliminary list of items as early as mid-February, the publication of an annotated list by mid-June, the reduction of congratulatory speeches, the limitation of the number of interventions for the election of officers and the modifications of the rule concerning the quorum, to name only a few, have undoubtedly facilitated the work of the General Assembly.

Since then a number of decisions have been taken on an *ad hoc* basis to save the time of the General

Assembly. For example, at the last session, where there were uncontested elections of the members of three subsidiary organs, the Assembly decided to dispense with the time-consuming balloting procedure on the understanding that such a measure would not constitute a precedent. In those cases, the number of candidates endorsed by the regional groups corresponded to the number of seats to be filled.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the outstanding role played by the regional groups in facilitating the consultations of the President of the General Assembly, which the increased membership obviously renders more difficult.

Nevertheless, in spite of the considerable progress achieved in rationalizing the procedures of the General Assembly, it must be recognized that there is still much room for improvement. While most of the recommendations of the Special Committee have been implemented, some of them have so far remained unheeded. It is not my purpose to deal at length with this subject in the present introduction. I would like, however, as an example, to draw the General Assembly's attention to one area where some improvement might be achieved. The Special Committee recommended several measures aimed at reducing the number of agenda items. Among them were the elimination of items which had lost their urgency or relevance, were not ripe for consideration or could be dealt with and even disposed of equally well by subsidiary organs, the staggering of items over two or more years and the grouping of related items under the same title.

Since items are included in the provisional agenda as a result of decisions taken by the General Assembly, the Secretariat has little discretion regarding the contents of the agenda. I must, however, draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that so far the above-mentioned recommendations have yielded hardly any results. At the twenty-sixth session, when the recommendations of the Special Committee were approved, the Assembly's agenda consisted of 102 items. The draft agenda of the thirty-first session, however, already comprises 125 items.

It is my firm belief that, in order to improve the efficiency of the General Assembly, an effort should be made to streamline the agenda. I therefore hope that at the beginning of the thirty-first session the General Committee will take a critical look at the draft agenda in the light of the recommendations of the Special Committee cited above. Needless to say, the Secretariat will do its utmost to assist in any effort aimed at improving the efficiency of the General Assembly.

I feel obliged to comment here on a new development in the method of decision-making of the General Assembly. At its thirtieth session, the Assembly had to deal with a number of issues on which there were serious divisions within the membership, and even within regional groupings. This led in some cases to the adoption of dual resolutions on the same subject. Resolutions on Western Sahara and on Korea are cases in point. This practice poses serious questions for the present and for the future. What action should be taken by the Secretary-General and Member States when two resolutions adopted on the same issue say quite different things? Perhaps even more important, will this practice weaken the essential negotiating function of the United Nations, which consists of working

out, through compromises and adjustments, a genuine majority agreement? Resort to this practice could prove to be a device for escaping responsibility at a time when many States are interested in enhancing the authority of the Assembly.

I believe that Member States should consider very carefully any tendencies which dilute the prestige, authority or credibility of the General Assembly. It is in the ultimate interest of all Members that the Assembly's decisions represent the considered views of the majority of Members and that they display realism and understanding.

The proceedings of the General Assembly have attracted much attention in recent years, not least because the voting pattern has changed radically and because many highly controversial questions are debated during the session with great frankness and conviction. As I said earlier, the emphasis in debate has been increasingly concentrated on the new geopolitical map of the world, on problems of decolonization and development and on the relationship between the developed and developing worlds. In this process the Assembly reflects changing attitudes, rising aspirations and the problems as well as the possibilities of the post-colonial era. This is a valuable function, even when it gives rise to frictions and strong reactions.

All Member States agree, I believe, that it would be a step in the wrong direction if the General Assembly were to become an arena for continuous confrontation. In fact, much has been done in the past year to move on from confrontation to constructive dialogue. This, I am convinced, is the right path for the future.

In this context some critics have denounced bloc voting and so-called automatic majorities. Such criticisms are not new, but they tend to ignore the role of the General Assembly in representing a changing world. Regional groups and so-called blocs all contain within them differences among their members on certain issues and full agreement on others. National policies and international relationships change and evolve; but while it is bound to reflect those changes the Assembly can only fulfil its responsibilities if it strives to bring consensus, co-operation and order to the conflicting concerns and interests of the world community. It is a living and growing organism endeavouring to respond to problems, changes and challenges far greater and more complex than any political institution has had to face before. The United Nations is both the best available means of reconciling international differences and the best means available to the international community for harmonizing and concerting its approach to vital common objectives. It will, I hope, be increasingly viewed in this light not only by its Members but by the peoples of the world, whom it strives to serve.

IX

The debate on a new international economic order has opened a new chapter in international relations, in which the sixth and seventh special sessions of the General Assembly, the adoption of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, and the fourth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development have so far been key points. What is at issue is the continuing validity of the economic system which has dominated the world since the great economic expansion of the industrialized Western countries more than a century ago. Put in the simplest possible terms, the basic fact of the present situation is

that the developing countries, with approximately 70 per cent of the world's population, enjoy only about 30 per cent of the world's income. The main question, which is infinitely complex, is whether a viable system can be agreed upon and made to work through international co-operation. Whatever the eventual practical outcome of this historic debate, it is clear that important elements of the existing system have to be replaced in order to take account of the political and economic realities of the world today, and to evolve a new system more responsive to the aspirations, rights and interests of the majority of the world's people.

Neither the developed nor the developing world is a single homogeneous bloc with identical and unchanging interests, and the place of the Socialist countries in a new economic order is also a matter of vital importance. The emergence of a new international system cannot therefore simply be taken for granted. Such a system will emerge only as the result of an intensive process of deliberation and co-operation on the whole range of economic relations between the nations of the world. This is an effort of unprecedented complexity, difficulty and historic importance. It is a challenge of major proportions to all nations and groups of nations.

Although the dissatisfaction of the developing countries with the existing economic system has been manifest at least since the first session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in 1964, the crisis in the world economy which became apparent late in 1973 underscored the need for a fundamental reassessment of the relationship between developed and developing countries. Although initially the questions of oil and food assumed a primary importance, by 1976 the key issues were of a more comprehensive nature: commodities and commodity agreements, the operation of the international monetary system and the assertion by the developing countries of the right to control their own resources and their own economic development.

The seventh special session of the General Assembly was in a sense the test as to whether there would be a continued confrontation between the industrialized and the developing worlds on these and other issues. By this time, however, basic positions had evolved sufficiently for the discussion to hinge not so much on whether, but rather on what kinds of, collective arrangements could be agreed on to meet the demands of developing countries, especially in the field of commodities. There was evident for the first time an entirely new approach to development and a general disposition to create effective conditions for a better world economic order.

The seventh special session was rightly acclaimed on all sides as a victory for conciliation and a co-operative view of the future. It also showed the potential of the General Assembly as a negotiating forum. It was, however, a beginning, not an end, and it is essential to maintain the momentum and to ensure that the significant change of attitudes, which made its success possible, persists.

Three months after the seventh special session, the Paris Conference on International Economic Co-operation was convened in an attempt to establish a forum for discussion involving a more limited number of countries. This has served a useful purpose in clarifying the positions of the different sides and will, it is hoped, help in devising specific measures to solve existing problems, for example, in the field of development finance, including debt relief. So far, however, it seems that,

whatever institutional framework is devised, it is the complexity of the issue under discussion and the will of Governments to make progress which determine the success or failure of efforts to solve problems of economic co-operation. In fact, the successful procedures of negotiation evolved at the seventh special session were born of the political determination of Governments to reach agreement.

In the United Nations system, a main focus of the discussion of these issues is the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The fourth session of UNCTAD showed the genuine determination of both developing and developed countries to maintain the dialogue started at the seventh special session of the General Assembly. Although it proved impossible to make a breakthrough on the central issue of commodities, an agreed time-table and procedure was established for further negotiations in order to work out acceptable solutions. It is to be hoped that both developed and developing countries will be able to build upon the political accommodation reached at the fourth session of the Conference.

The fourth session of UNCTAD clearly demonstrated that the United Nations in general, and UNCTAD in particular, have, as a result of the seventh special session, entered a new stage of international co-operation in which all Governments are resolved to approach development as a common problem requiring the convergence of their efforts and interests. A second characteristic of this new stage is that the United Nations is no longer engaged exclusively in advocating conceptual approaches to the consideration of development problems. The discussion is no longer whether to tackle certain questions but rather how to solve concrete problems. The coming months will be crucial to the search for substantive progress, which alone can remove the still-present risk of a new confrontation between developed and developing countries. The forthcoming session of the General Assembly will doubtless assess the degree to which the new international economic order is acquiring a practical meaning and will lay down further guidelines towards this objective.

X

In expressing some general thoughts on restructuring to the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Restructuring of the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations System, I stressed the necessity of keeping constantly in mind a clear picture of the actual tasks ahead for the period through which organizational and institutional changes are likely to apply. In the light of the rapid changes now taking place, our system needs first and foremost to remain highly adaptable. How far the United Nations will be involved in the broadened international co-operation which will be necessary in the future will depend, of course, on how much trust Governments are prepared to place in the system. The restructuring of that system should take account of the changes in international economic relations and in the world economy which will have to take place as the new international economic order evolves.

I do not propose here to discuss the advantages of one approach or another to restructuring. It is an infinitely complex subject which is now being considered by various bodies. I would, however, suggest that in addition to the process of restructuring it is important to develop more practical working arrangements within existing institutions. A constant and systematic discussion of substance among the different parts of the

system would allow common approaches to emerge naturally in response to the challenge of increasingly difficult problems. In this connexion we should consider seriously how to modernize the operation of international organizations in order to make them more efficient and more responsive to contemporary challenges.

The Economic and Social Council could also play a crucial role in the search for coherence and concentration of international effort. Serious attention should be given to a resumption by the Council of the main tasks entrusted to it under the Charter. The Council should concentrate on the great problems of the day rather than getting lost in routine and it should make its priority task the consideration of key current economic and social problems, as it did to some extent in its early years. The revitalization of the Council would, I believe, strengthen all the other components of the system in the discharge of their respective functions and give coherence to the effort of the United Nations system as a whole.

In the introduction to my report on the work of the Organization in 1973, I referred to the trend towards decentralization and to the need to ensure a greater measure of flexibility for the widely dispersed and separate organizational entities within the United Nations system. I stressed at the same time the equally compelling necessity to guard against fragmentation of the system. This dilemma persists and indeed has become more acute. It stems from the need to recognize that, given the wide and diversified tasks which the General Assembly at successive sessions has entrusted to the Secretary-General and the Secretariat, the Organization cannot always discharge effectively its manifold functions if it clings to rigidly centralized forms of organization and administration. Obviously its structure must change to conform to today's requirements. On the other hand, great care must be exercised to avoid an unnecessary proliferation of international organizations, which would lead not only to fragmentation but also inevitably to large increases in the overhead costs of the system at the expense of substantive activities.

The essential unity of the system is the *sine qua non* of effective, cohesive action. Much has been said of the importance of "speaking with one voice". Great emphasis is laid on the necessity of establishing a proper order of priorities among the multiplicity of tasks with which the United Nations system is faced. To carry the thrust towards flexibility and autonomy too far would be to threaten the ultimate ability of the system as a whole to discipline itself and to act as a viable, coherent and unified organization.

The timing and agenda of important international conferences is another area where more flexibility is clearly necessary. A new effort should be made to see the conference programme of the United Nations as a whole and to adjust its time-table in order to gain the best results and to ensure that each gathering contributes the maximum to the over-all objectives of the system.

Obviously an important aspect of restructuring is the organization of the Secretariat. I am fully aware of the existing deficiencies, which to a certain degree are a reflection of the way in which the system has evolved at the intergovernmental level. The changes in organization, structure and procedure that may be necessary at the Secretariat level are being thoroughly studied.

Although restructuring and the distribution of tasks among the different parts of the system are clearly

important, they should not, I believe, absorb our attention in such a way as to obscure the main features of the problems which the system is designed to tackle. I sometimes have the feeling that we tend to become too inward-looking and too concerned with the sharing out of political and bureaucratic functions, thus losing sight of the true nature and urgency of the problems with which we must deal.

XI

The protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms remains a primary goal of the United Nations. Progress in this area is essential, not only as a matter of principle, but because continuing violations of human rights naturally impede progress in other areas of international relations. The activities of the Organization in this field, based on pledges solemnly inscribed in the Charter, are pursued amid disturbing reports from various parts of the world of serious failures to comply with standards which United Nations organs have painstakingly elaborated and on which Member States have reached a broad consensus. World public opinion calls, with increasing insistence, for remedial measures in such cases. The United Nations, as the natural recipient of such appeals, has to try to take into account and resolve the contradictions between our declared ideals and the often harsh realities of everyday life.

As we pursue this infinitely difficult objective, the reconciliation of the principle of national sovereignty with the ideals expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will inevitably remain a complex and delicate problem, for the fact is that Governments view issues of human rights in different ways. Attempts to alleviate particular problems of human rights by various means, usually of a discreet and confidential nature, are a major and continuous task of the Secretary-General and his staff.

The new methods and procedures of implementation developed within the Organization over the last few years show considerable promise and are worth noting. Of special significance is the entry into force of the two International Covenants on Human Rights and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which give international legal content to a comprehensive range of basic human rights. These instruments may open new possibilities for an orderly and objective consideration of disputes and, in certain cases, for consideration of complaints from private sources. I would like to express the hope that a steadily increasing number of new ratifications to these covenants will be received so that this system of protecting human rights based on law, elaborated within the United Nations, will come as close to universality as possible.

Progress has also been made in such areas as action against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the Programme for the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, and measures designed to protect the rights of women and to improve the conditions of migrant workers. Not only are these significant steps in themselves, but they also provide important models of the actions required to hasten the time when every individual's rights will be fully assured and protected.

The responsibilities of the United Nations in the field of human rights grow daily, while international public opinion follows our actions with attention, concern and hope—and sometimes with a large degree of frustration

and disappointment. It is of primary importance for the Organization and for the world community that we continue to try to respond adequately to this challenge, in the full knowledge both of the immense difficulties involved and of the fundamental importance of this task for all peoples of the world.

XII

The financial situation of the Organization continues to be of concern, both with respect to the regular budget and as regards activities supported by voluntary contributions. The 54-member Negotiating Committee on the Financial Emergency of the United Nations, established by the General Assembly at its thirtieth session, has been re-examining this problem and will report to the Assembly at its thirty-first session. The regular budget approved for the biennium 1976-1977 at the thirtieth session now stands at \$740 million. Inflation and currency fluctuations have caused the level of expenditure on regular programmes to rise, in dollar terms, at an unprecedented rate in recent years. Partially concealed by these factors has been the real growth of the budget, as resolutions of the General Assembly and other bodies have each year resulted in the creation of new organizational units and added new tasks and programmes to those with which the Organization is already charged.

Increasing concern over the continuous growth in size of the budget is being expressed, particularly by the major contributors. This is true not only for the United Nations but also for a number of specialized agencies. In the United Nations itself, the time may not be far off when we shall have to ask ourselves what is the extent of real growth in the regular budget which can be accepted and supported by the Member States as a whole.

Acute financial difficulties have also been encountered during the past year by various long-standing operations and programmes supported by voluntary contributions. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) are cases in point where activities have had to be curtailed and serious questions have arisen whether, in the face of continuous and growing arrears, programmes can be continued unless new and more reliable methods of financing can be assured. It is encouraging that the United Nations Development Programme, through the confidence and special support of participating Governments and through administrative measures, has resolved its immediate financial difficulties. It remains, however, extremely important to secure continuous and adequate resources for the Programme.

New and urgent demands are continuously being directed at the United Nations system for a wide variety of activities. Obviously it is an obligation of the United Nations to organize international assistance wherever possible in great humanitarian and other emergencies which so often afflict peoples in various parts of the world. In addition to assistance in natural disasters which is co-ordinated by the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, the Organization has tried over the years to give help in a variety of other emergency situations. The operations in Bangladesh and in the Sahel are outstanding examples of such assistance, while substantial efforts have also been made in other parts of the world. Assistance operations con-

cerning Zambia and Mozambique both reflect decisions of the Security Council. The sums required for emergency situations are on occasion very large—indeed they are sometimes in excess of the total annual budget of the Organization.

In addition there is a steady growth of special funds for one purpose or another, all of which have to be floated by appeals for voluntary contributions. Special appeals are also made on occasion by the executive heads of specialized agencies for purposes within their respective areas of competence.

While there is certainly a general wish among the membership to give help in emergency situations, the proliferation of appeals for support for emergency programmes or special funds is clearly bringing into effect the law of diminishing returns. The result is not only to frustrate efforts to launch new projects with a respectable measure of support but also to jeopardize the viability of long-standing and vital activities of the Organization supported by voluntary funds. This tendency diminishes the capacity of the Organization to carry out its traditional responsibilities and tends also to impair its credibility both with those countries which look to the United Nations for help and with the donor countries which are constantly approached for further additional voluntary contributions.

There can be no doubt that the United Nations must remain responsive to the emergency needs which arise from time to time in different parts of the world. The creation of special funds unquestionably reflects the need for additional international activity in certain fields. On the other hand, we must clearly recognize the limitations on the availability of really substantial resources to the Organization. The budgetary resources of the United Nations are extremely modest in relation to its global task and the enormous diversity of its activities. Especially in times of economic stringency, Governments are increasingly reluctant to respond to a multiplicity of appeals for voluntary contributions over and above their regular contributions. The dilemma of the Organization, and indeed of the Secretary-General, is that while more and more new activities are called for, the response to appeals for voluntary contributions is far from commensurate with the funds required.

I believe, therefore, that very serious thought should be given to establishing a more orderly and productive approach to the mobilization of resources in the whole range of situations which call for special assistance from the United Nations. Such an approach should include criteria for the selection of tasks for which resources are to be mobilized and means by which the optimum use can be made of the limited resources available.

XIII

In the past years I have made it a point to visit Member States in order to make direct contacts with their leaders and to get some first-hand knowledge of their particular problems and of the perspective in which they see the United Nations. Perceptions and expectations of the world Organization vary greatly in different parts of the world, and it is all too easy, in the very intensive programme of activities which occupies us all increasingly at Headquarters and at the other main centres of United Nations activity, to become detached from the points of view of the Governments and peoples to whom we owe our first duty.

This is a problem which becomes increasingly difficult to solve as the membership grows and the programme of international activity becomes steadily more complex and time-consuming. To some extent the multiplicity of regional and other conferences provides an opportunity to see international co-operation from different viewpoints in the course of the year, but the problem of direct communication and understanding remains. Even a brief personal contact can often provide insights and give the opportunity for an exchange of views which can be of incomparable value to mutual understanding and co-operation in the future. For this reason I particularly welcome the visits to United Nations Headquarters of national leaders and of groups of national legislators and parliamentarians which have become an important part of our programme of work.

Effective communication with the general public on the work of the Organization is an even more difficult problem. International politics and diplomacy are, at the best of times, a difficult process for those not directly involved to grasp. Many vital elements are not, and sometimes cannot be, publicly described. Actions which have been taken, or indeed actions which have not been taken, are often hard to explain to the public in the absence of full background information. There is also the question of adequate coverage by the mass media, although we have to realize that coverage of the United Nations varies significantly from region to region. Although the representatives of the media accredited to the United Nations make great efforts to try to interpret the Organization to the world, the range of its activities is now so large and so complicated that only a very small part of them can be reported on any given day. Inevitably, the most newsworthy events are not always the most constructive or the most substantial. There is thus a tendency for the public to get a somewhat negative view of United Nations activities.

It is important to make use of new techniques and to search for new means to gain more widespread understanding and support both for the long-term objectives and for the day-to-day work of our Organization. A representative political institution cannot function effectively unless its aims, its work and its problems are, at least to some extent, understood at all levels of the society for which it works. In the case of the United Nations this is a task of the greatest complexity. Many non-governmental and private groups have devoted themselves to promoting understanding and support for international co-operation through the United Nations. It is important that those concerned directly in the work of the Organization should do all that they can to supplement such efforts.

XIV

In the preceding pages I have touched upon some of the main aspects of the work of the United Nations in its thirty-first year of activity. I have tried to indicate a few main areas where particular effort is required and to suggest some ways in which we might seek to improve the performance and effectiveness of our Organization.

It is important to appraise realistically the continuous waves of criticism which sweep over the United Nations from one direction or another. The Organization was created to deal with crisis and trouble. If it ceases to reflect faithfully the troubles of the world its relevance and usefulness will inevitably decline. But to reflect the troubles of the world is not enough. The work of the

United Nations must also be inspired by a vision of the future—or perhaps two visions—one of the world as we would wish it to be and one of the world as it could become if Governments were to lose their interest and their faith in international co-operation.

The world is neither as bad as the perennial prophets of doom tell us, nor as easy to manage through some perfect formula as Utopians would have us believe. Human society is a difficult, fascinating, frustrating and diverse conglomeration of peoples which has never been easy to manage, and it is probably now more difficult than ever to do so. On the other hand, we now have the advantage of knowing with some accuracy both what lies in our power to do and what is likely to happen if we fail to devise means of managing the world better. That is the true challenge of the United Nations.

Much of the necessary apparatus already exists both within and outside the United Nations system. But the mere apparatus is not enough to move things forward. The sails must be filled with the wind of political will and the desire for constructive change.

After five years as Secretary-General, I am more than ever convinced of the usefulness, indeed of the

necessity, of the United Nations. But I am more than ever worried at the reluctance or half-heartedness sometimes shown in making use of the Organization or developing it.

It is not enough to use the United Nations as a last resort in critical situations or as a repository for insoluble problems. The institution which the world desperately needs is a full-fledged instrument of co-operation with sufficient international solidarity and prestige not to be ignored in dangerous times or thrown off balance by sudden controversies and confrontations. I hope that the coming years will see real progress in this direction.



Kurt WALDHEIM
Secretary-General

31 August 1976