



**REPORT
OF THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL
ON THE
WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION**

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Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

I

1976 was a year of anticipation and restraint in most fields of international activity. This state of affairs was reflected in the proceedings of the thirty-first session of the General Assembly, where the prevailing spirit of realism and the evident general desire for reasonable and peaceful solutions to problems allowed us to view the coming year with a certain degree of cautious optimism. There was a general feeling that 1977 could, and should, be a year of progress in such crucial areas as the Middle East, southern Africa and Cyprus, as well as in the dialogue between developed and developing countries over the elements of a new international economic order, and also in the protracted negotiations on the law of the sea.

In the event, the cautious optimism of the turn of the year has neither been fully justified nor totally disappointed. The main problems concerned have proved just as difficult and intractable as we always knew them to be, while the dangers of delay and the risk of a rapid deterioration which might destroy the possibility of peaceful solutions have become more apparent than ever.

At the same time, additional major problems have recently come to the fore on the international scene, and some of them may well affect existing areas of United Nations concern, or even appear eventually on the agenda of the principal organs of the United Nations. Among these it may be relevant to mention the growing tensions in parts of northern and eastern Africa. Burdened with the weight of problems old and new, 1977 has undeniably become a year of growing anxiety for the international community. Efforts to resume the negotiating process in the Middle East have yet to bear fruit. We are still anxiously awaiting a breakthrough on Southern Rhodesia and Namibia. In Cyprus the talks are far from achieving an agreed settlement. As for the negotiations on the new international economic order, we shall soon see the way in which the General Assembly can pick up the process and make significant steps forward.

Meanwhile, East-West relationships appear to be going through a phase of reassessment which inevitably has repercussions on many major world problems. This reassessment concerns, *inter alia*, the nature of the military balance, both on the European and the intercontinental scale, including the development of new strategic weapons systems and the deployment of conventional forces. It also concerns the policies of the major Powers in relation to areas of current tension, especially in the Middle East and Africa, and also their approaches to questions of human contacts and the observance of human rights. This has led to public controversy and has tended to affect the texture of international relations far beyond the exclusive interests of the parties directly involved; it is therefore a matter of concern to the international community as a whole.

On the other hand, the current reassessment, if handled with wisdom and statesmanship, may provide a welcome opportunity to clarify the ground rules of peaceful coexistence and détente within the context of continued wide-ranging ideological and political differences. I note that efforts are under way to tackle the problems in question in a variety of bilateral and multilateral forums. I very much hope that these and other contacts will have a beneficial result.

I shall be dealing more specifically with most of these subjects later in this report. There is, however, a basic theme which is fundamental to them all and indeed to virtually all the activities of the United Nations. The history of the United Nations since its foundation has essentially been the story of the search for a working balance between national sovereignty and national interests on the one hand and international order and the long-term interests of the world community on the other. Perhaps the best way to gauge the historical effectiveness of the United Nations is to examine the problems before it by this criterion and to see how far the Organization has been able to secure, or help to secure, the vital balance.

After over five years as Secretary-General, I am more than ever convinced that we must consciously pay far more attention to this basic problem. I know very well that a miraculous and sudden transformation to a new and better world order is inconceivable. I do, however, believe that we must try, in all our activities, to facilitate and accelerate the evolutionary process by which the relations of Governments in all important matters will be regulated and harmonized with the long-term interests of the whole world community in view. This applies as much to disarmament as to economic order, as much to the environment as to the keeping of the peace.

The list of global problems is awe-inspiring: the rapidly escalating arms race, the increasing danger of proliferation of nuclear weapons, shortages or maldistribution of food, population pressures, the threat to the environment, the persistence of massive poverty, the competition for control of marine resources, the complex problem of energy, the dwindling of supplies of non-renewable natural resources and the whole spectrum of economic ills from inflation, unemployment and indebtedness to problems of unstable commodity and money markets.

It has often been said that our political institutions have not kept pace with our geopolitical evolution and our technological advances. In some areas this may well be the case, but in other areas the basic institutions are there and waiting to be used. The problem in those cases concerns the political will of Governments to utilize existing institutions for the constructive purposes that they were designed to fulfil. There is no

reason to assume that an international institution, however wisely and ingeniously structured, will automatically function to harmonize the divergent national interests of sovereign States. Parliamentary diplomacy can, on occasion, exacerbate conflicts as well as moderate or resolve them. To yield constructive results the international negotiating and decision-making process requires the conscious application of political will, coupled with self-restraint and statesmanship. The penalty for failure in this regard may be severe, since it may involve an intangible but vital factor, the confidence of Governments in international institutions—a factor which has all too often been lost sight of in the heat of political debate. It is easy to blame international institutions for shortcomings that are the direct result of the conflicting policies or actions of Governments. Certain specialized agencies have recently had to face this problem in an acute form.

In the United Nations itself, the trend of decisions adopted in some of the major deliberative organs has had the unintended side-effect of causing a reluctance to resort to the United Nations in certain conflict situations. It is imperative for the healthy development of the United Nations system that this problem be overcome in a constructive way.

National sovereignty and national feelings are a vital element of our society. At their best they represent the highest degree of political and social cohesion which it has so far been possible to achieve. The Charter of the United Nations rightly recognizes this fundamental fact of life in its emphasis on the sovereign independence of all the Members of the Organization. The United Nations is also, however, the symbol of a higher and more ambitious political and social aim, the evolution of an international community with interests, aspirations and loyalties of a far more wide-ranging kind. We are, I believe, beginning to see the birth of such a community—indeed that is one of the main fascinations of working in the United Nations. But we should not take it for granted that an international community will grow by itself automatically. The delicate plant must be protected, nurtured and encouraged if it is to survive the difficulties of its formative years. That, I believe, is the basic function of all of us who labour in the United Nations.

II

What, in all frankness, is the real position of the United Nations in the affairs of the world? Is it really a central element in the foreign policies of most Governments? Do its hard-fought resolutions, decisions and guidelines have a strong bearing on the conduct of nations? How do Governments really perceive the utility of their membership in the world Organization? These are questions which should be faced squarely.

Membership in the United Nations is in the first place the recognition of a balance between the sovereign rights and interests of Member States and their obligations under the Charter. Apart from this, I believe that most Governments regard their participation in the United Nations with a mixture of short-term self-interest, of decent concern for the common good and in the hope of establishing better relationships and better policies for the interdependent future. This is a basically practical attitude dominated neither by idealism nor by cynicism. It provides a point of departure for the search for the vital balance of national and international interests which I mentioned earlier as the main basic theme of our work.

At the minimum, the United Nations is a place for the public affirmation of international principles and objectives and a very useful last resort in times of danger and crisis. I believe, however, that to most Governments it has already become far more than that. It is true that in the heat or enthusiasm of great events it is sometimes relegated to the background. But it is always there as a permanent institution of nearly universal membership to which Governments may resort with all kinds of problems. It is a safety net in hazardous times, when bilateral diplomatic efforts fail to achieve their objectives. It is also the centre of long-term efforts to come to terms with the pressing problems of a world in transition and the emergent challenges of an increasingly interdependent future.

I am convinced that, given the time and the opportunity, the nations of the world can and will develop a more equitable and reasonable world order in which the lessons of the past will combine with the new possibilities of the present to form a world community and society in which all humanity can participate. The question is whether they will be given the time and the opportunity.

This brings me to the primary function of the United Nations, the maintenance of international peace and security, and to the role and standing of the Security Council. For if we stumble once again into a world conflagration, no matter what its cause, all our other hopes and dreams would be in vain.

The fact that the Security Council held more meetings last year than ever before may perhaps indicate that there is no ready alternative to the admittedly imperfect procedures of the United Nations either in times of global crisis or for the containing and solution of stubborn international problems. However, it would be naïve to pretend that the influence of the Security Council is commensurate with the number of meetings it holds. On the contrary, there is, or should be, a general anxiety about the capacity of the Council, in the present political circumstances, to fulfil the task entrusted to it by the Charter: the maintenance of international peace and security. It is essential that its capacity for this central function should not be lost sight of. The Council is, or was intended to be, the keystone of the structure of international order prescribed in the Charter. The way in which the Council is used, or not used, and the respect, or lack of it, for its decisions is therefore a matter of the highest importance for the effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations as an essential instrument of peace.

The Security Council itself is a hard-working, conscientious and painstaking body whose members combine dedication, knowledge and diplomatic skill. Over the years it has constantly learned from experience and improved its methods of work. Of that there can be no doubt. Time and again in the past the Council has shown that in a real crisis it is a uniquely valuable instrument for tipping the scales away from war and in favour of peace. However, at other times the voice of the Council is less certain. Indeed on some tragic occasions it is not heard at all, or is only heard as an accessory after the fact.

I know that there are practical political reasons for these shortcomings and that Governments reserve the right to use or to ignore the Security Council if they so desire. I only wish to repeat here that such attitudes are full of risk, for they may bring us to a time when

the Council is desperately needed and will be found to be too weak to fulfil its responsibilities. We should not forget the disastrous experience of the League of Nations. That is why I believe that the strengthening of the position and authority of the Security Council and respect for its decisions should be a major and continuing preoccupation of all Governments.

III

1977 came in as a year of great expectations. Great expectations can be dangerous if, in the event, they are disappointed. Apparently promising situations which turn sour can give rise to violent reactions which may in turn rapidly and unexpectedly threaten world peace and stability. In the absence of major steps forward, we shall face such a risk in several parts of the world in the not too distant future.

Of the political questions facing the international community, the unresolved problems of southern Africa have this year commanded as much, or more, attention than any others. There has been much activity, and some movement, over Southern Rhodesia, Namibia and the question of *apartheid* in South Africa. World opinion has been informed and activated to a greater extent than ever before on these problems. That in itself is a constructive development, but the last stages of decolonization in Africa are proving to be the most difficult and are fraught with great and increasing dangers.

The International Conference in Support of the Peoples of Zimbabwe and Namibia, held at Maputo in May, gave eloquent evidence of the commitment of the international community to achieve the goals that have been set by the United Nations for those Territories. This commitment shows also, I believe, the general realization that the inequities in the Territories involved and the dangers they pose to international peace and security must be removed once and for all, and speedily.

The United Nations has made repeated, but unsuccessful, attempts to have the problem of Namibia resolved. This question requires the widest measure of agreement on fundamentals if an acceptable and workable solution is to emerge. Most recently a number of Western States have taken an initiative in an effort to move the situation forward. I welcome any effort which can help us to make progress. In view of the leading role which the United Nations will have to play in any solution to the problem, I have kept in close touch with all the parties, keeping in mind the essential principles and guidelines set out in Security Council resolution 385 (1976).

The United Nations has always insisted that constitutional government in Zimbabwe must be based on majority rule. The administering Power has renewed its efforts to accomplish this, and new proposals for a settlement are, at the time of writing, under active discussion with the parties. At the same time, African leaders, and especially those of the front-line States, as well as other intermediaries, have continued the search for an acceptable solution. Meanwhile, serious acts of aggression by Rhodesian forces against Mozambique and hostile actions against Botswana and Zambia have served to put the whole question into sharp relief and have emphasized its gravity and the need to intensify our efforts for a speedy solution.

In South Africa the policy of *apartheid* continues and so does the tragic violence and loss of life which

inevitably attends it. There can be no solution to this "crime against the conscience and dignity of mankind", as the General Assembly and the Security Council have called it, as long as South Africa adheres to policies which exclude the majority of the population from the political life of the country and which result in the imprisonment or banning of many of their respected and acknowledged leaders. Such policies can only cause increasing civil strife and international outrage and diminish the chances of peaceful national reconciliation. It is encouraging that international opinion against *apartheid* continues to be successfully mobilized, most recently by the World Conference for Action against *Apartheid*, held at Lagos in August, but the danger remains great and the time very short.

Conflicts or potential conflicts in other parts of the African continent are a cause for serious concern. While these for the moment remain for the most part within the purview of the Organization of African Unity, the possibility of wider involvement is a constant potential hazard to international peace. In some cases the United Nations has been apprised of the situation or has received communications from the parties concerned. However, in the majority of cases the States concerned have not formally brought their difficulties to the Organization. The efforts of the African States to solve their own problems have the widespread support of the international community, and any signs of increased tension or wider involvement are naturally a matter of general anxiety. In any case, and as indicated in Article 52 of the Charter, the responsibilities of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security are complementary to, not competitive with, the efforts of regional organizations.

In the Middle East also, the current year came in with a widespread feeling that real progress towards a peaceful settlement might be at hand. The desire for peace had never been more clearly expressed on all sides in recent years. There was a climate of moderation and reasonableness which appeared to favour the efforts of the United Nations, the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East and others concerned with helping the parties to move forward to a just and peaceful settlement. There was a widespread feeling that the Geneva Conference might be resumed in the second half of this year.

I visited the area in early February to talk to all those concerned. My immediate object was to discuss ways and means of reconvening the Geneva Conference, but naturally our talks ranged over all the complexities of the Middle East problem. I concluded at that time that, while all concerned earnestly desired to move towards a negotiated settlement, the lack of confidence and the mutual distrust and fears of all the parties were a formidable barrier to progress. All seemed to be aware that an opportunity existed to resume meaningful negotiations and that, if it was not seized, the situation would almost certainly deteriorate, with incalculable consequences not only for the Middle East but for the international community as a whole.

In the report I submitted to the Security Council on this subject in February 1977, I observed that the obstacles in the way of reconvening the Geneva Conference were of a kind that could not be surmounted by purely procedural means. Changes of attitude on all sides were necessary. These would involve mutual recognition of the legitimacy of the claims of the dif-

ferent parties in suitable forms and with adequate guarantees, as well as an effort on all sides to define more clearly the shape of an ultimate peace settlement in the Middle East.

Since that time, contacts at various levels have continued with a view to finding the means to reconvene the Geneva Conference under conditions in which it could work constructively and effectively, and some advance has been made in clarifying the basic requirements for possible normalization of relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours. A consensus already exists in the international community that the essential elements of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and that no agreement will be viable that fails to provide for a homeland for the Palestinian people in one form or another.

None the less, definite progress towards the reconvening of the Geneva Conference still eludes us. The immediate problem in this regard remains the question of the representation of the interests and rights of the Palestinian people and the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization in this connexion. I continue to hope that this difficulty may be eventually overcome. The refusal of one side or the other to recognize the other party or parties to a dispute is not peculiar to the Middle East. Similar problems have arisen in the past and in a number of cases solutions were found by working out appropriate arrangements that met the objections of the parties while safeguarding their basic interests.

Meanwhile there has been some increase of tension in the area. Recently the Government of Israel took certain measures in relation to the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip which have been strongly protested by Arab States and the Palestine Liberation Organization, which considered them as deliberate acts to consolidate Israeli occupation and to pave the way for annexation. There have also been a number of bombing incidents in Israel and the occupied territories, for which various Palestinian organizations have claimed responsibility. I view the latest developments with deep concern. At the present critical stage in the search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, it is of vital importance that all the Governments and parties concerned should refrain from any moves likely to heighten tension or to affect the current efforts to resume the negotiating process.

It is now almost four years since the Security Council adopted resolution 338 (1973), in which it called upon the parties concerned to start immediately after the cease-fire the implementation of Council resolution 242 (1967) in all of its parts. The Council also decided that, "immediately and concurrently with the cease-fire, negotiations shall start between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East". In the intervening period since October 1973, various approaches have been tried to help promote a just and durable peace in the area. However, in spite of these approaches, no significant progress has been made in tackling the basic issues involved. The time may thus be opportune to attempt a general re-evaluation of how best to reactivate and sustain the negotiating process. Obviously, any re-evaluation will have to take into account the vital interests of the international com-

munity in the achievement of a just and durable peace in the Middle East.

Whatever the difficulties, there can be no question that the continuing stalemate in the Middle East imposes increasing risks on the international community as well as on the parties. It is more than ever urgent and vital that the parties preserve the spirit of moderation and realism and channel that spirit into the arduous and lengthy process of negotiation. If that were not to happen, I greatly fear that we shall be facing a major international crisis in the not too distant future.

In spite of the cease-fire which put an end to the strife in Lebanon last November, tension has persisted especially in the south of that country. While this very delicate and potentially explosive situation has considerable international implications in the wider context of the Middle East problem, it continues to be handled for the most part on a regional basis, and United Nations involvement has been confined largely to humanitarian assistance. The United Nations military observers continue to carry out their limited functions in circumstances of great difficulty and considerable danger. It is vitally important in the interest both of Lebanon and of peace in the region that the process of conciliation between the various factions involved in this area should evolve speedily and effectively. This process cannot succeed while the fighting continues in the south. I therefore appeal to all concerned to co-operate in the efforts now being made to secure a cease-fire.

In Cyprus, as in the Middle East, while United Nations peace-keeping forces help to maintain quiet, progress towards a just and lasting peace has been disappointingly slow. At the beginning of the year, hopes for a settlement of the basic issues were stirred when, for the first time since 1963, the leaders of the two communities agreed to meet face to face. The late Archbishop Makarios and Mr. Denktash met twice under United Nations auspices and at the second of those meetings, over which I presided, agreed on a resumption of the intercommunal talks as well as on general guidelines for their negotiators, calling for a bicomunal federal republic of Cyprus. At the subsequent talks in Vienna, proposals were submitted by the Greek Cypriot side on the territorial aspect and by the Turkish Cypriot side on the constitutional aspect of the problem. However, the gap between the two positions remained wide in Vienna, and the fact has to be faced that the parties have not so far found it possible to advance from their statements of conflicting positions to the stage of meaningful negotiations. On one crucial issue—the territorial aspect—the formulation of concrete proposals by both sides has yet to be completed. Following the death of President Makarios last month additional difficulties have developed, including statements from one of the sides questioning the possibility of pursuing the negotiating process as long as the Government of Cyprus continues to enjoy general recognition.

I am deeply concerned at the trend towards a hardening of positions and at the instances of apparent failure to carry out fully undertakings and commitments freely assumed at the highest level in the course of the talks, a tendency which, if not reversed, may jeopardize the very concept of a negotiated settlement. I and my Special Representative in Cyprus have undertaken consultations with all concerned in a renewed effort to work out a basis for reactivating the search for a freely

negotiated, just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus problem through the intercommunal talks under my auspices. If this effort is to succeed, it is essential for the parties to avoid any further actions that could worsen the situation, including changes in the *status quo* of disputed areas and of the area along the cease-fire lines. Despite the very real political difficulties faced in this regard by all concerned, I sincerely hope that the necessary concessions and compromises can be made in order to make progress towards a satisfactory solution of the Cyprus problem.

The situations in southern Africa, the Middle East and Cyprus are serious in themselves and also have very special implications for international peace and security. In all of them the multilateral approach of the United Nations, complemented by bilateral efforts and the initiatives of different groups of Member States, seems to present the best way of maintaining the momentum towards a settlement. In the meantime, the United Nations performs an indispensable daily task in maintaining quiet along the lines of potential conflict in the Middle East and Cyprus. This essential activity receives little publicity and is more or less taken for granted unless things go wrong. It is also a very considerable burden on the Organization and on contributing States. The essential daily services which our Organization and its Members perform to maintain international peace should not be forgotten.

In all the three situations I have mentioned the stakes are very high and the dangers of failure are increasingly ominous. I most earnestly hope that the great efforts being made through the United Nations and elsewhere to solve the basic problems involved will begin to bear fruit before the end of the year. If they do not, I fear that the outlook for 1978 will be a serious and unsettled one for the international community.

IV

I have frequently said that the United Nations cannot hope to function effectively on the basis of the Charter unless there is major progress in the field of disarmament. Without such progress world order based on collective responsibility and international confidence cannot come into being. The question of disarmament lies at the heart of the problem of international order, for, in an environment dominated by the international arms race, military and strategic considerations tend to shape the over-all relations between States, affecting all other relations and transactions and disturbing the economy. We have become used to living in a highly unnatural state of affairs where the shadow of nuclear weapons and of vast and increasing arrays of conventional armaments has virtually come to be accepted as the normal light of day. In this profoundly unhealthy situation there can be no guarantee that national independence and sovereignty, equality of rights, non-resort to force or to the threat of force, and the right of every people to decide its own destiny will in fact be honoured as the principles on which we have long agreed that the international order should be based. And yet it is all too obvious that the world is still ineffectively groping for the key to this problem of life and death.

Since the Second World War there have been some modest achievements, but they have been in the nature of arms limitation rather than disarmament, or regulating competition and proscribing certain particularly

undesirable developments rather than on substantially reducing important weapons systems. It is now becoming increasingly clear that such an approach is wholly inadequate to stem the tide of an innovating arms race, where technological ingenuity tends constantly to outstrip the pace of negotiations. We cannot take for granted, as a permanent feature of life, that new military developments must and will always be controllable in a stable balance of mutual or multiple deterrence. If we continue to try only to regulate or to temporize with the arms race, treating the symptoms rather than the underlying causes, we run an increasing risk of temporizing ourselves into oblivion.

Nowhere is the problem of finding a workable balance between national fears and preoccupations and the long-term interests of the world community so acute as in the question of disarmament. The facts of the present situation are well known. Stocks of nuclear weapons have already for many years been sufficient to destroy the world many times over, and yet the number of nuclear warheads has increased five-fold in the past eight years. These weapons are constantly being diversified and their performance improved. The dividing line between the use of nuclear and conventional arms is being steadily eroded, while every year the danger of the further spread of nuclear weapons increases as the technology becomes more widely known. So-called conventional weapons are also becoming increasingly sophisticated and deadly. Continuous study and assessment of nuclear-weapon problems, including non-proliferation, are clearly required if the international community is to be able to move forward. The International Atomic Energy Agency is one available instrument for limiting some of the dangers involved.

All this is happening in a world which has accepted the objective of a new international economic order and which urgently requires all its energy and resources to meet a series of urgent human problems. For several years annual world military expenditure has been about \$300 billion. By contrast the World Health Organization has spent about \$83 million over 10 years to eradicate smallpox in the world—a sum insufficient to buy one modern supersonic bomber. That organization's programme for eradicating malaria at an estimated cost of \$450 million—half of what is spent daily for military purposes—is dragging for lack of funds. In a world where scientific and technological capability is one of the keys to the future, 25 per cent of the world's scientific manpower and 40 per cent of all research and development spending is engaged for military purposes.

These are but a few examples of the burden on the economic development of all States constituted by our failure to achieve substantial progress on disarmament. Disarmament must therefore be a vital part not only of our efforts to establish a better system of international peace and security, but also of our attempts to restructure the economic and social order of the world.

The relation between disarmament and development has, for some years, been the subject of international debate and there is, as a result, widespread concern to find practical and concrete ways to effect a reduction of military budgets and to transfer human and material resources to areas of development that sorely need them. It is evident that further comprehensive study is needed of this problem if we are to make more substantive progress.

It is now 10 years since a United Nations study was made of the most awesome of all weapons, nuclear arms. In this period we have seen a continued, not to say accelerated development in this field, bringing new concepts and applications into public focus. It would seem high time for the international community again to undertake a comprehensive study and assessment of nuclear-weapon problems in the light of the developments of recent years.

The special role and responsibilities of the great military Powers for peace and security are fully recognized. Progress towards nuclear disarmament must obviously originate in the first place with the major nuclear Powers. The strategic arms limitation talks are of crucial importance, and I wish here to express the hope that definitive and substantial progress can soon be made in reducing the vast numbers of nuclear weapons now existing, as well as in controlling the dangerous and destabilizing impact of the development of new weapons systems. The success of these talks is unquestionably also crucial to the creation of the atmosphere of international confidence in which alone further disarmament efforts can flourish. I also have in mind in this connexion the talks on the reduction of armaments and armed forces in Europe and efforts to create nuclear-weapon-free zones in certain areas.

The interest of the United Nations, and the international community as a whole, in these issues is not merely that of a passive spectator. In a period where a new form of world society, symbolized by the United Nations, is emerging, the majority of the medium and small Powers, the developing countries and the non-aligned—by whatever groupings we may wish to categorize them—must be involved, and actively so, in a problem which vitally affects them all. They can, and should, play an important part in a comprehensive approach to disarmament aimed at real disarmament in the context of world order, which is at the same time realistic as to practical possibilities, including the escalating dangers of a continued deadlock.

For all these reasons the General Assembly has decided to call for a special session on disarmament. But if this initiative is to be successful, careful preparation and the involvement of informed world public opinion will certainly be important prerequisites for any progress.

The task ahead is immensely difficult and complex, but the expectations of humanity are high. I hope that in the coming years the United Nations will be able to show its collective determination to fulfil them.

V

The promotion and encouragement of respect for human rights for all is explicitly stated in Article 1 of the Charter as one of the basic purposes of the United Nations. In the past year increasing international attention and concern has been focused on the question of human rights in general and on the work of the United Nations in this field in particular. This is a subject fundamental to the nature of the future world community as well as to the way in which people live at the present time. It is also a matter of great complexity and delicacy, reflecting as it does the diversity of traditions, codes of behaviour, practices and priorities in different countries and different parts of the world.

Perhaps more than in any other field of international activity we face in the human rights field the gulf be-

tween idealistic declarations and hard realities. The fundamental principle is that respect for individual human dignity is based on universally accepted values and that therefore abuses of human rights, wherever they may occur, are a legitimate subject for international concern. This concept, touching as it does on the sovereignty of Member States as well as on the relationship between human rights and the individual's duty to his community, confronts us with the most challenging problem of putting principles into action and of achieving an effective balance between national and international concerns.

The basic aim of United Nations actions in this field is not to accuse or to provoke acrimonious debate, but to develop a common consciousness in the international community and to encourage improvement in respect for individual dignity and fundamental freedoms. The most basic document on this matter is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly in 1948. It continues to provide the foundations for work in this field, and the principles contained therein have been made more binding by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights with its Optional Protocol.

When these arrangements obtained the necessary ratifications and came into force in 1976, they made possible the establishment of the Human Rights Committee, which met for the first time in March of this year. The significance of this Committee is that for the first time we have an international instrument to review the progress and problems of the States legally bound by the Covenant in the area of civil and political rights. The Committee also provides an unprecedented channel to consider communications from individuals alleging human rights violations by States parties to the Protocol. These developments are necessary and significant steps in the long and persistent effort by the United Nations to translate lofty aims and principles of human rights into binding instruments of international law. It is my hope that this system of protecting human rights—based on legally binding international instruments—will eventually come as close as possible to being universal.

With increased international attention to human rights has come increasing frustration and disappointment at the failure to protect and promote human rights in various parts of the world. In this regard, it must be remembered that the existing machinery, such as the Commission on Human Rights, is intergovernmental, and intergovernmental bodies of course reflect the positions of the Member States. Despite existing international agreements and commitments in support of human rights, questions brought before such bodies are often interpreted by the States concerned to be matters of exclusive domestic jurisdiction. Thus we continue to have a conflict between individually asserted principles of national sovereignty and the broad commitment to human rights.

For my part, I have continued to exercise my good offices in specific human rights cases. I have usually found my efforts to be most effective when undertaken confidentially, although I have not hesitated to speak out when I felt that this was necessary and in the general interest. In most cases, however, little or nothing can be said publicly about particular efforts without jeopardizing their success. In practical and urgent cases, in the present circumstances of international affairs,

I feel that my actions must be governed by one overriding criterion—namely, what approach will best serve the welfare of the individuals concerned.

Present efforts in the areas of torture, rights of women, children and migrant workers, and racial discrimination provide opportunities for constructive action. It is also my fervent hope that the international community will constructively concern itself with the pernicious threat of terrorism to basic human rights. For the work of the United Nations to be effective in the field of human rights we need the active commitment, co-operation and political will of the international community. Only thus shall we steadily draw nearer to a situation where the United Nations will be able increasingly to promote and assure a more universal practical application of common standards of fundamental human rights and freedoms.

VI

More than ever, the world economic situation should this year engage the attention of the General Assembly. This is not only because very limited progress was registered during 18 months of intensive negotiation on matters of policy on which a conceptual agreement had been reached long ago. It is because, if viewed in the broadest context, it is possible to detect in international economic relations certain emergent trends which cannot be conducive to the achievement of a new international economic order. The Assembly should carefully analyse any changes in the over-all economic environment and use its authority in an effort to identify and, to the extent possible, arrest and reverse those trends.

If anything characterizes the economic environment of today, it is an uncertainty more pervasive than at any time since the end of the Second World War. We are undoubtedly witnessing events which do not fit easily within the traditional pattern of economic cycles as well as marked departures from previous modes of economic behaviour. This is particularly disturbing in the field of capital investment in the industrialized countries, on which so much of the long-term prospects of the world economy depends. With the absence of that most needed stimulus, unemployment remains at levels far higher than those which characterized the recovery from previous post-war recessions. Inflation, although somewhat abated, still persists. This in turn requires Governments to focus attention on the immediate problems of short-term demand, to the detriment of the medium- and long-term changes which must be brought about in the structure of the world economy.

A generalized loss of confidence may lead to actions which only recently would have been viewed as highly detrimental to the fabric of international relations. The steady expansion of international trade, which was such an engine of progress during the last quarter century, has not, it is true, come to an end. But there are increasing indications that the temptation of protectionism, never completely dormant, may no longer be resisted with the desirable vigour.

It is of the essence of international trade that its direction and composition should undergo constant changes, and that industrial structures should adapt themselves to such changes in ways which, despite temporary frictions, would bring advantages to all the parties concerned. Trade rules constitute a very delicate and vulnerable structure. They have been so conceived as to accommodate a number of tolerable deviations.

It is true that a large part of world transactions is now conducted outside the framework of these rules and that, to a point, bilateral arrangements could be viewed as devices for expanding trade, for instance when they are used between countries with different economic régimes, or to facilitate adjustments to unexpected events. But there is a risk that these trends may carry world trade beyond these benign effects. For it should not be overlooked that protectionism, no matter in what form, cannot fail to cause a rise in the general level of prices and that the burden which is removed by such expedients from one or more countries is almost certainly bound to be deflected onto others. If trade rules have to be altered in relation to new circumstances, this should result from a process of general negotiation.

I am convinced that, if we do not face up to the probable results of the attitudes and trends which are now emerging on the world economic scene, the prospects of progress towards the new international economic order will be seriously jeopardized.

VII

There is another aspect of international economic policy which I would hope the General Assembly would examine in its full implications. In recent years, we have become increasingly aware of certain limiting factors likely to affect the continuing expansion of the world economy. We cannot exclude from our horizon the possibility of shortages, perhaps only localized and temporary, which could have serious consequences on an already strained process of development. For quite a number of countries such situations would mean, among other things, the aggravation of their balance-of-payments problems and a retardation of their growth process. The avoidance of such risks calls for a measure of global responsibility which the United Nations system should be prepared to undertake. This would constitute a modest beginning in the art of global management. It would not, of course, involve the establishment of supra-national authorities or ambitious and elaborate mechanisms of international planning, but rather an enlargement of the functions of monitoring and forecasting, an improvement of consultation procedures, and the promotion, when required, of technological research and development.

It is in the fields of food and energy that such action seems to be most urgently needed.

The United Nations system has made a good start in respect of food. The establishment of the International Fund for Agricultural Development and of the other mechanisms provided for by the World Food Conference, held in Rome in 1974, constitute remarkable achievements of the international community in the past two years. Yet the United Nations Water Conference has recently reminded us of one major constraint in the development of adequate food policies. There can be no let-up, therefore, in the efforts to ensure the security of food supplies for a growing population and the improvement of nutritional standards. The actions which have been started must be sustained and enlarged. In such endeavours, there is no substitute for a long-term commitment.

In the field of energy, it is essential that international co-operation be organized on a much wider basis, in the context of the efforts to establish a new international economic order. This would constitute a recognition of the inequalities which stem from accidents of geography and from historical developments, and would take ac-

count of the enormous expenditures involved in the development of new technologies and in the search for new energy sources. There is an obvious need for massive training programmes to develop an indigenous capacity in every country and to facilitate the acquisition of new skills and know-how. Perhaps, above all, the rapid dissemination of information relating to new resources and new technologies is required to minimize the cost and the delays involved in their development. Knowing as we now do the awesome complexity of the nuclear option, we should recognize the imperative need to begin looking towards an energy order which could protect humanity against grave risks while providing the world economy with an essential resource in sufficient quantities and with a wider geographic base. The narrow range of options to which all but a few countries are at present confined must be rapidly enlarged. With this in mind, I suggested to the Economic and Social Council that the time had come to give serious attention to the decision taken by the General Assembly at its seventh special session regarding the possible establishment of an energy institute. In my view, such an instrument should be established within the United Nations, if it is to be part of a widespread effort to promote development.

VIII

The way the business of the United Nations is transacted is a matter which affects not only the capacity of the Organization for useful work but also the attitude of the general public to our work. If the United Nations is going to serve the world community as a negotiating forum for the restructuring of international economic relations, we should perhaps consider how the traditions and practices of what has hitherto been a largely deliberative body should be adjusted to meet new demands. While I fully recognize the importance of public statements, I cannot stress enough the usefulness of informal and frank exchanges in contributing to the over-all results of the process as a whole. There were some promising signs of new practices of consultation and negotiation during the seventh special session of the General Assembly. These could, I believe, be developed further to great advantage.

United Nations procedures are easy to criticize but hard to improve. The term "talking-shop" is sometimes used in a critical sense when describing the United Nations, but it is important to remember that a "talking-shop" often serves an extremely useful purpose, especially in times of danger or crisis. Nor should it be forgotten that the unprecedented degree of international economic co-operation achieved in the post-war period had its genesis in the deliberative process of this Organization. It is true, however, that our methods of work require constant scrutiny and improvement.

A particular source of anxiety and expense is the volume of United Nations documentation. Although we in the Secretariat try constantly to stem this tidal wave, one soon discovers, when one tries to reduce the over-all volume of documentation, that every document is either sanctified by long usage or has its own particular sponsors. If we are to try to give impetus and due priority to our work, we must continue to try to reduce the daily flood of paper in which really important documents tend to drown or lose their impact.

The role and procedures of all organs and committees inevitably change with the passing years, and it is valuable to take stock from time to time of the direction

in which such developments are leading. One such recent trend concerns the working of the Second and Fifth Committees of the General Assembly, which repeatedly experience difficulties in concluding their very heavy programme of work on time. Given the ever-increasing workload of these Committees, it seems clear that only a concerted effort by the Secretariat and the delegations can improve matters. To help resolve this problem I have ordered an internal review of procedures to facilitate the organization of the work of the Fifth Committee. The result of this review is available to all delegations and I trust they will give their full co-operation in the implementation of these steps.

In this same area of our methods of work, sufficient experience of special conferences on the environment, population, women's rights, food, habitat, water and others has been obtained in the past few years for it to be possible to begin a realistic review of this particular form of international co-operation. Despite their undoubted utility in certain circumstances, such conferences pose problems of organization and expense, both for the United Nations and sometimes for host countries, which call for careful use of them. It is worth examining whether the tasks set for some of these conferences could not be equally or even better achieved, at less expense, by the machinery of the established organs of the United Nations, and whether a proliferation of such conferences may not cause them to become so commonplace as to diminish their impact. The organization by the United Nations Children's Fund of the Year of the Child in 1979 is an example of an alternative method of focusing attention on a major global problem. It is possible that other important questions may be susceptible to this kind of approach. Member States should, I think, give full weight to these considerations before deciding that future special conferences should be convened. And when such a conference is called, an attempt should be made to clarify in advance what is to be achieved at that conference.

IX

The Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea is one of the most important and far-reaching endeavours ever embarked on by the international community. Its sixth session, which concluded on 15 July, did not complete the work of the Conference, although it was generally agreed that progress had been made and that some issues which had previously been highly controversial had become less so. At the end of the session an informal composite negotiating text was produced which was designed to serve as the basis for continuing negotiations prior to and during the seventh session of the Conference, to be convened at Geneva in March 1978.

The possibility of the Conference failing, after such a long and arduous process, to produce a convention on the law of the sea would pose grave dangers for the future as well as reflect on the credibility of the United Nations as a forum for important international negotiations.

X

The international civil service in general and the United Nations Secretariat in particular have been the targets of considerable criticism emanating both from internal and from external sources. Some of this criticism is constructive while much of it, regrettably, is not well founded and is destructive. In view of the high

standards set by the Charter, the very complex practical conditions in which these goals have to be achieved, as well as the varying political attitudes towards the Organization, this is not altogether surprising, but as the chief administrative officer of the Organization it is my duty to take cognizance of such criticisms.

The administering of an international civil service inevitably presents far greater problems than running the civil service of a single nation. While the Charter is very clear on the exclusive international loyalty of the Secretariat, in practice pressures and difficulties inevitably arise—in the Secretariat no less than elsewhere in the Organization—from the basic problem of the United Nations: the balance between national and international interests.

I believe that we have come a long way in building up a Secretariat whose members view their professional obligations to the United Nations in the manner prescribed in the Charter. In spite of the growing complexity and diversity of tasks now performed by the United Nations, it is my conviction that, as a general rule, we are also maintaining a high standard of work in the Secretariat, thanks to the dedication and devotion of the staff.

We are steadily improving the geographical distribution of posts which has, of course, been a considerable problem during a period of very rapid expansion of the membership. We are pressing on with steps to make a reality of the aims of the Charter in relation to equality of the sexes, although we should be frank to admit that progress on such a basic principle is often difficult to achieve.

With the valuable advice and assistance of the International Civil Service Commission we are well on our way towards meeting the need, keenly felt in the past, of developing a remuneration system for the staff which, as prescribed in the Charter, will ensure for the Organization the ability to recruit and retain staff who meet the standards required by the Charter and which is at the same time fair and equitable both to the staff and to the Member States who must meet its costs. Fluctuations in relative currency values, inflation and factors such as the dispersion of the staff at over 600 duty stations throughout the world make this one of the most complex administrative problems faced by the Secretariat. It is clear that we have to keep the system constantly under review and in this respect the contribution of the International Civil Service Commission is invaluable, ensuring that the determination of the conditions of service in the international civil service will be based on expert and objective criteria.

Many other facets of the personnel administration of the Secretariat will continue to deserve constant vigilance in order to promote and further enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization. In an international bureaucracy even more than a national one there is a continuing need to review, to streamline and to tighten the administrative machinery. It is my intention to give particular attention to this problem in the coming year.

XI

A perennial problem for any organization, especially one as complex as the United Nations, is to provide a firm yet flexible basis for the management of its limited resources. The main instrument for this purpose is the regular budget which must, on the one hand, provide

the resources required for the discharge of the functions of the Organization and, on the other, take due account of the economic circumstances of its membership.

In order to establish a framework for setting priorities among the many and varied objectives of the Organization, the budget is formulated in terms of programmes and their resource requirements so as to facilitate to the maximum extent possible the financial decision-making process. This approach is designed to permit and, at the same time, to require an integrated evaluation of the financial inputs and their related objectives. In this way the budget serves as a tool for executing and monitoring the activities of the United Nations as a whole.

In submitting the proposed budget for the next biennium, I have tried to strike a reasonable balance between the indispensable requirements of the Organization and the financial burden on its membership. Meeting the requirements of the existing programmes approved by the General Assembly together with the impact of inflation already places a burden on our financial resources.

To the extent that the Secretary-General is free to influence or decide on the financial commitments to be assumed, I have made a determined effort to keep within prudent limits the rate of growth in the expenditures of the Organization. As a result, the rate of resource growth for the next biennium, measured in real terms, will not exceed 2.2 per cent and will provide for only the most essential of new requirements. Despite this effort at restraint, the uncontrollable effects of inflation, currency fluctuations and the continuing costs of maintaining existing programmes have an inevitable impact.

Efforts to exercise budgetary restraint are, of course, affected by the growing number and the diversification of programmes and activities decided upon by the inter-governmental organs of the Organization. Obviously, the effective implementation of programmes and activities is heavily dependent on the provision of the necessary financial means. It is therefore more necessary than ever for the General Assembly and other organs to be fully aware of the financial implications of all their activities and decisions. To take the simplest example, an average half-day, fully-serviced committee meeting at Headquarters costs about \$7,300, and one document page with full distribution costs about \$300. Our efforts to economize and manage resources could effectively be assisted if such simple basic facts are borne in mind when considering such matters as the time of conferences and meetings, or requirements for documentation.

I cannot fail to refer again to the financial difficulties which arise from the late payment or withholding of contributions. Although efforts to tighten and strengthen the financial management of the Organization have largely diminished the possibility of a financial crisis, this does not mean that a solution has been found to the continuing financial difficulties of the Organization. Definitive action by the membership is needed to remedy this situation.

XII

In considering the problems of communication with the public at large, I wrote in my last report that a representative political institution cannot function effectively unless its aims, its work and its problems are understood at all levels of the society for which it works.

We are, I fear, still far from this state of affairs in the United Nations. I firmly believe that, for all its shortcomings and frustrations, the United Nations is an indispensable institution. It does not, of course, always operate in precisely the manner foreseen in the Charter. Its record in regard both to the wisdom and far-sightedness of its decisions and to the respect and adherence given to them by Member States is admittedly uneven. It sometimes proves incapable of timely action in matters affecting international peace and security, and it tends to encounter difficulties in rapidly achieving agreed and effective solutions to great world problems. It could be said, on the other hand, that it is a remarkable step forward that its Members can agree to tackle such problems at all.

Many of the activities of the United Nations are so much taken for granted that they are scarcely reported any more. This is probably not a bad development, but it should not cause us to lose sight of the value of the multiple activities of our Organization or the dangerous vacuum in international life that would be created if, for any reason, they were to cease.

We now take for granted that virtually all the Governments of the world can meet in the United Nations to discuss almost any subject under the sun. We take for granted that, when a conflict threatens, the Security Council will meet and sometimes, by that simple fact alone, will provide a breathing space and an opportunity for reflection, reassessment and clarification. We take for granted the indefatigable efforts of the members of the Security Council and many other Member States to help in international disputes and other difficult problems. We take for granted that in the United Nations there can be meetings and communication between representatives of contending parties who can meet virtually nowhere else in the world. We take peace-keeping and good offices for granted. We assume that the humanitarian agencies of the United Nations will be there in emergency or dire need to take care of the afflicted or the refugees. We have become completely used to the unprecedented idea that the nations of the world, almost as a matter of course, can discuss as far-reaching a concept as the new international economic order.

The fact is that our Organization has come into middle age and is no longer a young prodigy—or a young problem. This is in one way comforting and in another way dangerous. It is comforting that the United Nations is a firmly established and recognized world institution. It is dangerous if the Organization becomes complacent, set in its ways, unresponsive to new ideas or irrelevant to contemporary issues. We must constantly

be on guard to preserve the institution from such tendencies.

Earlier in this report I asked what was the real position of the United Nations in the affairs of the world. All the Governments that loyally support the Organization deserve a serious answer to this question. Is the United Nations simply a meeting-place for long but not necessarily decisive discussions of current questions? Is it the fever hospital of the international community, where serious cases can be brought in the hope that temperatures will be reduced and the condition improved or at least stabilized to prevent a wider infection? Is the United Nations the crucible in which a new community of all humanity will be moulded and where solutions to present problems and great plans for the future can be evolved through co-operation by the statesmen and the wise men of the world?

The United Nations comprises elements of all these functions, but it is still to some extent an organization in search of its identity and its true role. It tends to react rather than to foresee, to deal with the effects of a crisis rather than anticipate and forestall that crisis. As a result, its problems sometimes seem insurmountable and its frustrations intolerable. But looking back it is possible to see how far we have come in 32 years, and on the basis of this experience it is also possible to look forward and to see how far we may go.

I have entered on my second term of office as Secretary-General with few illusions but with a determination based on five years' hard experience. I know that the world cannot do without the United Nations. I also know that the world is often disillusioned with the United Nations. But above all I am convinced that we are embarked on the right road to objectives of vital importance for the future. If progress is slow, that, in the nature of things, is hardly surprising. But if the will is there, and the talent and the dedication, we should not be dismayed by the difficulties. If we believe that by human actions wisely directed the world can be made a better place, then the United Nations presents unrivalled opportunities. I hope that we shall seize them.



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