

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED
NATIONS TO COMMEMORATE THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
ADOPTION OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 10 December 1958, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Mr. Charles MALIK (Lebanon)

Statements were made by:

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
Mr. Guillaume Georges-Picot
Mr. R.S.S. Gunewardene

The PRESIDENT: I call to order the special meeting of the General Assembly for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Members are aware that this meeting has been convened by decision of the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council. In my capacity as President I had the pleasure of inviting Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and M. René Cassin, former Chairmen of the Commission on Human Rights and Ambassador Gunewardene, the Commission's present Chairman, to address the Assembly on this occasion. I further had the honour to request a message from Mr. Felixberto Serrano, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, who also was Chairman of the Commission. I would like to read, if I may, Mr. Serrano's message. It is as follows:

"On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights, I wish to express my genuine satisfaction and pride in the manner in which the United Nations has stood fast to uphold within its power the dignity of man.

"Having served as a past Chairman of the Human Rights Commission, I have keenly followed the steps taken and the progress made by the world Organization in keeping inviolate the rights of human beings everywhere. Upon such a resolute determination is anchored the hope of all free peoples to continue to live in freedom, happiness and peace. We can do no less today than to rededicate our united efforts in warding off all extraneous forces which attempt to diminish if not to destroy the very cornerstone of our freedom."

That is the end of the message from Mr. Serrano, a former Chairman of the Human Rights Commission.

I wish now to invite Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt to address the Assembly.

Mrs. ROOSEVELT: Fellow peoples, and Members of the General Assembly: I suppose, as the first Chairman, I am given the privilege of being the first speaker, and I am very happy to have this opportunity because this is the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Now, while there was no dissenting vote against this Declaration, that did not mean that every Member of the Assembly felt that the Declaration had achieved everything that we hoped to do; but we had the satisfaction of knowing

(Mrs. Roosevelt)

that for the first time we had been able to set down on paper the aspirations and the hopes of the peoples of the world in a declaration -- it was not legally binding, no country had to change its laws. They could read this document, and the more you read it, the more I think you realize that it did express many of the hopes and aspirations that people had for freedom and the protection of freedom and of justice in the world. And it touched many of the things that entered the daily lives of people.

In writing the Charter of the United Nations, it would have been easy to have emphasized many other things -- the importance of economic considerations, the importance of military arrangements, of political arrangements to be arrived at by coming together. But the objective that was stated at that time, when the "savage of war" was much closer to us than it is today, was, first, to bring about an atmosphere in which peace could grow and then we emphasized the individual, the rights of individuals, the dignity of the individual human being. And the Commission on Human Rights was the first commission that the Economic and Social Council created; and the reason, I think, was that at that time it was realized that basically we could not have peace, or an atmosphere in which peace could grow, unless we recognized the rights of individual human beings -- their importance, their dignity -- and agreed that that was the basic thing that had to be accepted throughout the world. And I think many of us, although we knew well that the Declaration must and could only be a beginning, hoped that it would have as much beneficial effect as it has had. It has been translated by the United Nations into many languages. Peoples that had perhaps never really understood what human rights meant have had an opportunity to read it -- and under the resolution which was passed when the Declaration was accepted, many countries have carried out their obligation under that resolution to acquaint their people with what was said in the Declaration, through educational means, through every possible method of spreading knowledge of the Declaration.

It was hoped that it would be followed very quickly by a covenant or covenants that would be legally binding, that would be in the form of treaties. That was found to be difficult because of different stages of development, or different legal codes, of the phraseology which it is very difficult to have legally acceptable in so many different countries. But I still hope that we will -- even if we begin with covenants that cover only a few rights -- soon begin and allow for the continuation, the growth of these rights.

(Mrs. Roosevelt)

We must certainly not feel that, because the Universal Declaration has undoubtedly had great moral impact upon the world, because many of the new nations have incorporated parts of the Declaration into their Constitutions or have said that they agree with what was expressed in the Declaration, we must not feel that the work to obtain human rights has actually been accomplished. All of us know that, in our own countries, there is much still to be done. I speak in the United States with a full knowledge that in my own country we have a great deal to do. We know very well what our failures are. We only sometimes flounder because we do not know the wisest way of changing situations that we acknowledge are not as they should be. But we are working, in my country, to try to bring about the rights and freedoms for all that are set forth in the Declaration. It may take us longer than we want, but we will not stop until we reach what we hope is one of the real things that must be done to move forward the peace of the world.

Every nation, I am sure, has the same feeling of obligation. Every nation, I am sure, has amongst its citizens people who are dedicated to bring about changes if necessary within their Governments so that the human personality may develop freely, so that there may be a sense in every human being of dignity, of the right to the freedoms that are set forth in this Declaration.

I remember very well that some people felt this Declaration was old-fashioned when it was adopted because it laid greater stress on civil and political rights than it did on the economic and social rights. I think all of us have learned that economic and social rights are equally important with civil and political rights. Some of us have had the experience of having civil and political rights first and of obtaining economic and social rights because we had civil and political rights. Others have emphasized, through their Governments, economic and social rights, and perhaps they will eventually achieve civil and political rights because they have the economic and social rights. But in the end I am convinced that all human beings want freedom to think, freedom of expression and the protection that the civil and political rights give to preserve the economic and social rights. And I hope that, as we celebrate today the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, those of us who have memories of the arguments that went on over every word, not only in the Commission but later

(Mrs. Roosevelt)

in the Third Committee of the General Assembly, will remember that it takes a long time to deal with things that touch the hearts and minds of men, but that this is a basic and most important celebration because it makes us think of what was done in the past, of what people worked for and of the fact that we have not finished our business. It is not just a question of getting the Covenants written and accepted -- that is part of the business -- but it is the question of actually living and working in our countries for the freedom and the justice to each human being. And I hope that that is what we will dedicate ourselves to in the next ten years and that each of us will have the feeling that they must do something as individuals, whether they represent their Governments or whether they do it as laymen in their countries, but each of us must do something because this is one of the basic foundation stones if we are ever to achieve what the United Nations was established to achieve -- an atmosphere in which peace can grow in the world.

The PRESIDENT: I regret to inform the Assembly that Mr. René Cassin has been unable to attend this meeting personally. He has, however, requested Mr. Georges-Picot, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, to read the statement he had intended to make today. I wish therefore now to call on Ambassador Georges-Picot of France.

Mr. GEORGES-PICOT (interpretation from French): First, I wish to express the regrets of Mr. Cassin who, as was pointed out by the President, had hoped to be able to come here to address the Assembly on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Unfortunately, because of the state of his health and because of his duties as President of the Conseil d'Etat, at a time when the organic texts provided by the new French Constitution are being drafted, it was impossible for him to come to New York.

I wish to tell you that I appreciate the honour of reading his speech to you since I was also associated with the work of the Commission on Human Rights as Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations in charge of the Department of Social Affairs. Mr. Henri Laugier would have been even more competent to do this, since he was Assistant Secretary-General in charge of

(Mr. Georges-Picot)

the Department of Social Affairs at the time of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All the former members of the Commission and the members of the Secretariat will understand that I wish to associate his name with this celebration.

I will now read to you Mr. Cassin's speech. I need not stress that this is his text: you will feel his steady enthusiasm and his faith in the Commission on Human Rights, which did not prevent him from preserving his realistic views on what it is possible to do and the methods to be used.

I will now read the text of Mr. Cassin's address:

(Mr. Georges-Picot)

Mr. President, I want to tell you, and also your colleagues in the General Assembly, how honoured I feel to have been invited to come from Paris to take part in the session dedicated to the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, along with the other distinguished authors of this Declaration, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, yourself and the present distinguished Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Gunawardene.

Above and beyond the individual framers of the Declaration, those whom we honour here today are the all too numerous martyrs whose sacrifices made the Universal Declaration necessary and possible; they are the men, famous or obscure, living or dead, who prepared the way for this document. We are also honouring my own country, France, as well as the countries which were the forerunners and the new countries whose vitality in 1948 made possible the success of the first step.

But I would not feel that I merit the privilege granted me if I did not take this unusual opportunity -- when I find myself before the honourable representatives of eighty-one States Members of the United Nations, the representatives of virtually the whole human race -- to search my conscience in public, calmly, without extravagance and polemics.

I first wish to express my complete and ardent confidence in the soundness and in the future of the Universal Declaration, both as a programme and as a lever of action for the defence and the progress of rights and of the fundamental liberties of man without discrimination.

I will then deal frankly with the methods used heretofore by the various organs of the United Nations to meet the difficulties inherent in the legal battle for human rights.

May I finally give you some personal views, so that our common effort may be commensurate with our sound reasons for hope and, in particular, that it not deceive those who are oppressed, who suffer from injustice and who have placed their confidence in the will of the United Nations that justice be done.

In Paris on 10 December 1948, the members of the General Assembly of the United Nations were already aware that, in adopting the Universal Declaration, they were accomplishing an historic act because they were taking the first step in realizing the aims of the Charter of San Francisco and the promises concerning the protection of human rights and fundamental liberties. They did this by proclaiming an ideal and a programme that was to be the same for all peoples.

(Mr. Georges-Picot)

Of course, certain people have criticized this document as being too ambitious, theoretical, and lacking in immediate juridical obligations; and others have criticized it as being outmoded and left behind by events. But the ten years that have just passed, far from showing the weakness and unsuitability of the Declaration to the requirements of our age, have, on the contrary, reaffirmed its soundness and have revealed that its vitality surpasses all expectations.

The idea of an international declaration had not even occurred to the authors of the Covenant of the League of Nations; for a long time it remained limited to a small group of experts and philanthropists. In 1929, the Institute of International Law in New York issued a draft to which there was little reaction. It was the innumerable atrocities that preceded and were committed during World War II that decided the heads of the countries that had suffered to raise a protest of the universal conscience against the atrocities committed against the dignity of man in order to prevent their recurrence. But the Universal Declaration does not draw its strength only from occasional tragic circumstances. The support it received in 1948 from all countries of the most varied continents that had, fortunately, been spared by the war, proves that it answers the general and present aspirations of mankind, both in the areas where man is too often the victim of anarchy, of poverty and of ignorance, as well as in the areas where he is becoming emancipated.

Is it not striking to note that none of the major currents of thought prevailing in the world, apart from the aftermath of Hitlerism, has ever threatened the support given in 1948 to the principles of the Universal Declaration, either in the Western democracies, or in the popular or socialist democracies, or in the Islamic countries, or in Africa and Asia, or among the followers of most diverse faiths and churches?

The countries that, in the last ten years, have achieved independence, and those that have joined the United Nations, have all considered the Universal Declaration as being part of their heritage, expressed either in their constitutions or through unilateral acts or treaties.

Thus, the Universal Declaration reflects the unanimous determination to improve the present condition of mankind. Far from being a separate field of action, the continuous struggle for human rights must be carried on with its own

means, together with the struggle for peace, for prosperity and for all the other objectives pursued by both the United Nations and the specialized agencies: labour, education, health, agricultural production, technical co-operation and so forth.

It is in the light of this fundamental idea that we must now compare the methods followed up to the present time by the organs of the United Nations with the tremendous needs and difficulties of our time.

As you know, our principal organs -- the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat -- have been assisted by a special auxiliary agency, the Commission on Human Rights, which was the only one of this kind directly provided for by the Charter-- Article 68 -- for "the promotion of human rights".

However, this Commission is by no means the august High Court of independent leaders, the supreme righter of wrongs, which the hopes of the peoples had imagined. Composed, from the beginning, like the other commissions of the Economic and Social Council, of governmental representatives, it has not received a mandate to rule on individual cases involving violations of human rights which might have been brought before it by complaints either of the States of victims, or of non-governmental civic organizations. In 1946 the Commission on Human Rights had already been considered as an organ that ought to work on general problems concerning fundamental liberties, human rights, the struggle against discrimination and similar matters, by means of resolutions and suggestions of a general nature. Never in all the twelve years has the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council referred a single individual case to the Commission for its recommendations or opinion on a specific matter of this sort.

On the other hand, within this framework, it has been given a leading role in co-ordination. Although it may not have a monopoly in protecting human rights, in the vast field to which I have just referred, conversely nothing that has to do with human rights -- even though falling under the jurisdiction of a specialized agency such as ILO, UNESCO or WHO -- is unknown to it.

Without trying to recapitulate the various manifestations of the activity of the Commission on Human Rights since it began functioning on 29 January 1947, I shall list under four main headings the various stages of this activity.

(Mr. Georges-Picot)

First, from January 1947 to December 1948 the Commission on Human Rights, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Roosevelt, with Mr. Charles Malik as Rapporteur and myself -- I am speaking now for Mr. Cassin -- as authors of the first draft, devoted its first three sessions to drawing up the outline for the three-part Charter on Human Rights, which from the very first it had been given a mandate to draft.

(Mr. Georges-Picot)

In actual fact -- thanks to the documentation gathered by the Secretariat and to the admirable assistance of Mr. Laugier, Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Social Affairs, of Professor Humphrey, Director of the Division of Human Rights, of Professor Giraud, advisor, of Mr. Schwelb, and of all their assistants -- the outline and the text of the Declaration were ready in less than eighteen months to be submitted to the vote of the General Assembly. Although the Assembly brought to the draft submitted indisputable improvements and a broadening of the horizon which transformed the simple international Declaration proposed into a universal document common to all the peoples of the earth, at least our Commission did not disappoint the general expectations. In passing, let us pay tribute to the memory of those of our colleagues who have died since 1948 and who, like the Chinese philosopher Mr. Chang, made such a precious contribution to the drafting of the central part of the Charter -- that is, the Declaration.

The second stage of the Commission's work lasted for six years, from 1948 to 1954. It was devoted -- under the chairmanship, in turn, of Mrs. Roosevelt, Mr. Malik and our late friend Professor Mahmoud Azmi -- to the very difficult task of drafting the other two parts of the Charter on Human Rights. This meant, on the one hand, transforming the proclamation of the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration into legal commitments of States written into binding pacts, and, on the other hand, organizing the means of putting into effect internationally the rights and freedoms thus defined and sanctioned.

You, gentlemen, are in a position to gauge for yourselves the obstacles that arose in opposition to the prompt adoption of the twin pacts submitted to you by the Commission on Human Rights: one concerning civil and political rights, and the other relative to economic, social and cultural rights. For the past four years, despite its conscientious labours, the General Assembly has felt itself caught between two contradictory demands. It can either hastily draw up fairly sizable pacts for your respective countries, doing a superficial job, which, in the end, will not be ratified by the States and will be a dead letter from the start; or, on the contrary, it can endeavour to make as complete agreements as possible -- but then it might weary those who are waiting and disappoint the hopes of the most zealous champions of human rights.

In reality, the drama that has been played over these pacts for the past ten years lies in the fact that the pacts mean that States which traditionally have been sovereign must recognize certain limits to their sovereignty in the manner in which they treat the individuals under their jurisdiction. Thus the general nature of these pacts constitutes for some a motive for fear and refusal; for others, enticement towards making rival promises to other nations; and for yet others, a pretext for throwing the responsibilities on other shoulders.

Now, while the work on the general pacts moves along slowly, and it has not even been possible to consider problems of implementation, many other conventions of a more limited scope fortunately succeed in being adopted and even ratified. As encouraging examples, let me mention those conventions on the protection of refugees and displaced persons and on the prevention of statelessness -- 28 July 1951 and 28 September 1954, respectively; the complementary agreement for the abolition and the repression of slavery in all its forms -- 7 September 1956; those on the nationality of married women -- 20 February 1957; and on the abolition of forced labour -- No. 105, International Labour Organisation, 1957.

We come to the third stage. Since 1954, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights has entered a new phase of fruitful initiatives. Since its origin it has retained as its direct associate the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities which, unlike the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information, survived the period of restrictions. Now, for the first time in history, this Sub-Commission -- supported and guided by our Commission -- has undertaken a practical struggle, not just an academic or nominal one, against those acts of discrimination condemned by the Charter and by the Universal Declaration and which are among the gravest sources of the inequalities and misery by which humanity has been oppressed for thousands of years. It has done so by first of all initiating objective investigations of the present state of discrimination in specific fields: education, employment, religion, political rights, etc.

This rational method obtained immediate results. It made possible, primarily, the organization of a fruitful collaboration between the Commission on Human Rights and the specialized agencies, which respected the competence of all. Thus the International Labour Conference adopted on 23 June 1958 -- after the required two readings -- a convention and a recommendation directed against discrimination in

(Mr. Georges-Picot)

the fields of employment and the professions, the initiative for which may be credited to your Commission. For its part, the recent UNESCO general conference which was concluded on 5 December 1958 in Paris, has just begun to study Mr. Ammoun's report on discrimination with respect to teaching, which resulted from work done by the United Nations in order to prepare a convention and recommendations in this field.

Now for the fourth stage. The difficulties facing the rapid adoption and the enforcement of the general pacts on human rights had inspired us, as early as 1950, with the idea of instituting without further delay a system of periodic reports from the States on the progress realized and the obstacles met by each of them in the field of human rights and fundamental liberties. This idea then seemed premature, but was taken up again by another delegation in 1953. This time it was followed by a favourable resolution of the Economic and Social Council and by the comforting fact of its voluntary implementation by a large majority of the Member States. The first triennial reports were filed, at the end of 1957 and the beginning of 1958, with the Human Rights Commission, which has not yet been able to devote the time necessary for the close study of these reports, and even less for drafting the first general conclusions. But this new system of reports which has just begun to function should be given the most serious consideration, especially if the non-governmental organizations should spontaneously draft and file triennial reports dealing with the same subject, and if, furthermore, the Commission on Human Rights -- greatly inspired by the example set by the initial method of work -- should obtain from the United Nations the possibility of surrounding itself with impartial experts of high calibre to help it extract, from the periodic reports of the Member States, not acrimonious charges but the lessons necessary for the effective and universal progress of human rights.

(Mr. Georges-Picot)

Even though I have had to omit certain aspects of the activity of the Commission on Human Rights, I would feel badly if, in this balance sheet of its activity, I did not join to its efforts those accomplished by the Commission on the Status of Women. If the Charter and the Universal Declaration were really the starting point of an evolution, it is actually in the struggle against illiteracy, on the one hand, and in the improvement of the condition -- so hard, so unequal -- of women in so many countries of the world, on the other, that this evolution has been the most remarkable. As a matter of fact and even though we are a long, long way from the desired goal, it is a question of a real "revolution" in the customs and the laws of thousands of years.

But it is now time that, against the assets of the balance sheet on Human Rights, we honestly state the liabilities. Unfortunately, they are numerous.

To be sure, since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with the help of technical improvements in communication media, something has changed in the world. Cries of distress and appeals to justice are heard which never, until a recent period, could have been uttered, much less listened to.

Let us not rashly affirm then that never has the sum total of the oppressions and the injustices borne by human beings -- who are multiplying rapidly -- been greater than it is today.

However, let us have the courage to recognize the persistent contrast between our noble ideal and present realities. The International Federation of Human Rights, in conformity with its duty, has drawn attention to the crying abuses which subsist just as much in the countries with a long democratic tradition as in the countries that are less developed and, to an even greater extent, in the totalitarian States. How many of the fundamental liberties are obstructed or snuffed out? How many social, economic or cultural rights are repudiated? Slavery, which has been formally outlawed for more than a century, is prohibited by the Universal Declaration, as well as by various conventions. Yet, is it not openly practised in certain regions? The obstacles standing in the way of political emancipation and economic and social changes beneficial to human beings sometimes constitute an excuse for, but are often far from justifying, such a state of affairs.

(Mr. Georges-Picot)

The truth is that apart from the broad reforms requiring a good deal of time and positive international co-operation -- technical assistance is one of the best examples -- it will be necessary and possible, within a rather short period of time, to overcome certain of the most crying deficiencies in our Organization, which is designed to protect human rights.

One of the most disastrous of these -- according to general opinion -- is the almost total shirking of its obligations by the United Nations concerning the examination of communications, that is to say, complaints addressed to it each year since 1946 by individuals who claim to be victims of violations of their fundamental liberties and by non-official groups. I say "almost total" because in certain very serious cases these complaints have either been brought before the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council, the General Assembly, or even referred by the latter to the International Court of Justice. At times, positive results have been obtained but, failing this, world opinion has been able to form a judgement. Plaintiffs and defendants have been able to make themselves heard.

Further, an ever-increasing number of Governments are taking it upon themselves to give a detailed reply to the Secretariat on alleged violations mentioned in such and such a communication.

Finally, on the regional level, the European Commission on Human Rights has also received from a certain number of States, signatories of the Convention of 4 November 1950, the authority to investigate even petitions from individuals which they receive after several careful screenings.

All these exceptions, however, only confirm the rule of proper but icy silence invariably meted out to complaints in general. They confirm as well the danger which exists that any abuse whatsoever, true or false -- for which the authorities of certain States were denounced -- might even in the most favourable cases be given a political colouration by the examination procedures followed.

In order that the idea of an ultimate recourse to justice should not prove a cruel and mocking deception, I take the liberty of saying to the high authority of the United Nations that it should take certain minimum measures in the nearest possible future.

(Mr. Georges-Picot)

Some people consider that the real remedy for this situation lies in the reform of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights by investing its members with the standing of independent judges. While in 1946 I shared this idea, I maintain that in the conditions presently prevailing in the United Nations such a step would be neither practical nor effective. I have shown that members of the Commission on Human Rights have taken very seriously the powers conferred on them by the Charter and subsequent practice, and have made some useful suggestions. To replace what has succeeded in producing some results, in order completely to transform the composition and the mission of the Commission on Human Rights, would be a hazardous and perilous undertaking for human rights themselves.

Should we, therefore, limit ourselves to revising resolution 75 (V) of the Economic and Social Council, in order to set up a completely new procedure for the effective investigation of communications? Several of my colleagues, weary of the present stagnation, are resigned to this solution.

For my part, I do not think we have the right to change horses in mid-stream and so wantonly vitiate previous prolonged efforts.

Now, the Commission on Human Rights, in two pacts submitted to the Assembly, has provided for carefully worded and reasonable means of implementation which some already say are too cautious and which bear in mind the nature of the rights that would be threatened. These proposals include the setting up of a Human Rights Committee for the investigation of complaints concerning civil and political rights for which there is no specialized agency. This Committee would be composed of several independent leaders who would offer the greatest possible guarantees, as they would be elected by the International Court of Justice of The Hague from a long list of names proposed by member States. The Committee would have the authority to make recommendations.

The General Assembly of the United Nations would be empowered to sub-divide and complete these proposals. It could separate one pact from the rest, which could be voted upon on an emergency basis. It would also have the right to take every possible measure for preventing and setting aside all futile and tendentious complaints and those which, by tortuous methods, might actually be aimed at sowing suspicion and dissension between member nations. But I implore the General Assembly to realize that it is responsible before the universal conscience for the maintenance or the termination of a situation which profoundly affects not only general opinion but also the truly authorized defenders of Human Rights, as proclaimed by the Universal Declaration.

(Mr. Georges-Picot)

In many States, arrangements have been made for administrative or judicial measures against dictatorial administrations. Convinced as I am that the first responsibility of Member States is to provide effective guarantees of human rights in their own countries, I hope that, without waiting for international conventions and resolutions, those States which have fallen behind will hasten to fill in the gaps in their legislation and to restrain the power of their administrations.

But the best results obtained on the national level will never absolve the United Nations from the indivisible responsibilities it has undertaken by voting for the Universal Declaration.

In the preamble to this document, it has appealed to all individuals and all social groups to incline the minds of human beings, through instruction and education, toward international understanding and the abolition of prejudices. But in the same preamble, allusion is made to "progressive international measures" resting on the co-operation of Member States. It is the United Nations -- I repeat -- which bears the greatest responsibility for those measures.

(Mr. Georges-Picot)

At the end of this examination of conscience, I invite all those representatives who have done me the honour of listening to me to reflect on the suggestions which, after years of fighting for justice and right, I have taken the liberty of putting before you on my own account. Consider, above all, the enormous moral influence the actions of the General Assembly of the United Nations will have following a moving ceremony which celebrates the anniversary, but also the future, of the Universal Declaration. This Declaration, not incorporated into the Charter of the United Nations, has its own separate existence. It will stand even if the Charter should be transformed or should perish.

Until we have, step by step, done everything possible to reduce to a great extent the oppressions, injustices and sorrows by which too many of our brothers are overwhelmed, we shall not have done anything to make the world more human. In the eloquent words of Mr. Torres Bodet, and with those words I will conclude, "it is then that the Universal Declaration would rise up and accuse us."

The PRESIDENT: I wish now to invite Ambassador Gunewardene of Ceylon to address the Assembly.

Mr. GUNewardENE: Mr. President, ten years ago, on 10 December 1948, in Paris, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and we meet here this morning to celebrate the tenth anniversary of that historic event. It is fitting that you, sir, who played so significant a role in the promotion of human rights during the whole of your public career, should preside at this special plenary meeting summoned to celebrate this happy occasion. Your work, as one of the architects of the Declaration and as Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, is too well known to require elaboration here.

I am proud to be associated on this occasion with Mrs. Roosevelt, whose work in the cause of the promotion of human rights has compelled the admiration, love and affection of the mass of mankind. We, who have watched her career over the years, pay tribute to her singleness of purpose and the

spirit of dedication which she has always manifested in the fight for the recognition of human rights. She will continue to inspire all workers in this noble cause as one who has matched her words with her deeds, a virtue all too rare in this imperfect world of ours.

It is a matter for regret that Professor Cassin is unable to be with us in person on this happy occasion. It was only a few months ago that I affectionately described him as "Mr. Human Rights". That sums up my opinion of this Grand Old Man of the Commission on Human Rights. We are privileged to have from him, however, an inspiring message which, I have no doubt, will receive universal approbation.

It is to me a matter of personal gratification that I should be functioning as Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights this year, when the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is being celebrated throughout the world.

The United Nations and its specialized agencies, it must be agreed, have to their credit a distinctive record of achievement in maintaining peace and stability in a troubled world, and in promoting the health, happiness and prosperity of the peoples of all nations. Nevertheless, it is my humble opinion that the adoption of this unique instrument, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, stands out as perhaps the greatest achievement of the United Nations in carrying out its purpose of promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for the fundamental freedoms of all, irrespective of race, colour, sex, language or religion.

The importance of the Declaration cannot be overemphasized. It sets a universal standard of achievement. Its effects can be seen in the national constitutions adopted since 1948, in international conventions and agreements, in countless recommendations and the relations of the United Nations, and in the vast field of national legislation and practice.

The Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights laid down two guiding principles to be borne in mind in observing the tenth anniversary this year. First, that we should demonstrate to the world the accomplishments of the United Nations in promoting human rights, and secondly, that we should stimulate greater effort by laying special emphasis on what remains to be done. Far be it from my purpose to outline all that the

United Nations has done in attempting to secure the universal and effective recognition and observance of the rights and freedoms which the Declaration proclaims and which Member States, under the Charter, have pledged themselves to promote. General standards and definitions are laid down in the Universal Declaration and in the draft international Covenants on human rights which are still being elaborated by the General Assembly. Problems relating to the prevention of discrimination, protection of minorities, freedom of information, refugees, stateless persons, slavery, forced labour and prisoners of war have been studied, resulting in the a number of international conventions, resolutions and recommendations to Governments.

Among the achievements of the United Nations in the field of human rights, those concerning the status of women deserve special mention. The Commission on the Status of Women, working towards equality between men and women as proclaimed in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, initiated a Convention on the Political Rights of Women and a Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, both of which were adopted by the General Assembly and ratified by a number of States. Working also for the improvement of the status of women in the educational, economic, social and civic fields, the Commission made numerous recommendations to Governments through the Economic and Social Council, and these recommendations have already borne fruit. For example, it is a matter of pride for the United Nations to note that thirty-five countries have taken action, since 1945, to extend voting rights to women. With the help of the United Nations, in many areas of the world women now receive access to education on equal terms with men, and equal pay for equal work.

More recently, emphasis has been placed on the exchange of knowledge and experience in protecting human rights. A whole programme of advisory services is developing. The first of a series of studies of particular rights or groups of rights has begun. The subject chosen this year is the right to be free from arbitrary arrest, detention and exile.

The Commission on Human Rights, at its last session, considered the first series of triennial reports by Governments on the development of human rights in their territories. The regional seminars which have been held at Bangkok, Baguio City and Santiago have brought together persons directly concerned in a practical enforcement of human rights, who, by exchanging their experience, knowledge and difficulties, have made a great contribution towards enhancing the recognition of human rights.

The value of these seminars is now recognized even by those who were sceptical at the beginning. Next year, in May, a seminar will be held in my own country, with the co-operation of the Government of Ceylon, for participants from Asia and the Far East, and Australia and New Zealand, on a topic which has aroused world-wide interest, the subject chosen being "Judicial and other remedies against the illegal exercise or abuse of administrative authority".

This brief enumeration will illustrate that the Declaration of Human Rights, far from being a mere statement of pious hopes, has come to be a vital force in reshaping the post-war world. This age in which we live has been described as the age of the common man. The common man, who for centuries has remained inarticulate, content to suffer from want, disease and ignorance as his preordained lot, saw in the Declaration of Human Rights, endorsed by the nations of the world, the first gleam of hope after years of tyranny, oppression and persecution. This awakened in him, for the first time, a new realization of his own worth and dignity as a human being.

While we have reasonable justification for satisfaction, there is no room for complacency. Much work remains to be done at all levels, international, governmental and community, for securing the universal enjoyment of human rights. The Declaration was prepared within two years. The drafting of the Covenants, however, has now engaged the attention of the United Nations for ten years, and of the Third Committee of the Assembly for five years. While I am deeply appreciative of the devoted work done by the Third Committee during the last five years, the fact remains that the Committee still has at least sixty articles more to consider. In view of their great importance, it would seem that the completion of the Covenants demands greater attention than has been hitherto given, even if it should mean the utilization of extraordinary procedures. I have in mind the holding of a special conference of plenipotentiaries to complete the drafting of the Covenants, which would then be approved by a special session of the General Assembly. This appears to be the only way in which we will translate, in our lifetime, the principles of the Declaration into precise, legally binding terms. Without this, there will always be the difficulty of the proper implementation and enforcement of human rights. Judging from the enthusiasm shown in all parts of the world, I feel a course such as this should commend itself to all Member States. Whatever the method, the result must be achieved, and soon, too.

A second matter of importance is that of petitions. The United Nations has, up to the beginning of this year, received about 64,000 petitions complaining of violations of human rights. As yet, it has not found any means to deal with these complaints, some of which undoubtedly are very genuine. The present system of communication, whereby a summary of a complaint is submitted in a confidential list to the Commission on Human Rights and a copy of the communication is sent to the Government concerned, satisfies neither the complainant nor the conscience of the United Nations. The Commission, at its last session, appointed a Committee to consider an appropriate procedure, and it is fervently hoped that this Committee will submit to the next session a suitable recommendation. I may even venture to suggest the setting up of a permanent special committee to examine the complaints; in order to eliminate irresponsible complaints, the right to submit complaints may be restricted to non-governmental organizations enjoying consultative status. If such a procedure is not adopted, a time will come when the faith of the peoples in the power and willingness of the United Nations to uphold these rights will be shaken.

These are two of the major respects in which greater effort will prove valuable. The protection of human rights is a matter concerning every man and every woman throughout the world. It is not surprising, therefore, that the interest shown has not been restricted to Governments and governmental circles, but that unofficial organizations have played a considerable role in its development. The Charter of the United Nations provides for the granting of consultative status to non-governmental organizations. It can perhaps be stated without exaggeration that the greatest contribution from the non-governmental organizations has, over the years, been made in the field of human rights. Non-governmental organizations were instrumental in the drafting or elaborating of the Charter provisions on human rights. They have faithfully and industriously followed our work, and have let us have the benefit of their suggestions and advice. If the history of these last years is written, the share in it of the non-governmental organizations will, I have no doubt, be seen to be considerable. In many respects, it may be even be said that when, at times, it has looked as though the United Nations was standing still in matters related to human rights, it was the efforts of the non-governmental organizations and their conscience which helped to awaken the organs of the United Nations. The continued vigilance of the non-governmental organizations is, therefore, imperative.

From my remarks so far, it will be readily appreciated that an equally important task before us will be the enlargement of the scope and organization of the Human Rights Division of the Secretariat, if the present and future progress of the United Nations on human rights is to be sustained with any regard to the quality of its work. With all the handicaps, I wish, however, to pay a tribute to the Human Rights Division for the excellent work it has done during the last few years.

We must admit that the ambition of securing universal enjoyment of human rights is far from complete achievement in 1958. Discrimination based on colour and race continues to be ruthlessly practised in civilized countries, and, strange to say, even law and religion are pleaded in defence of such conduct. Political freedom is denied to millions of people, and spontaneous mass movements launched for the obtaining of such rights are cruelly suppressed in the name of law and order. Ignorance yet stalks the world, and millions of people still continue to live in dirt, squalor and misery. Freedom of thought, freedom of speech and freedom of conscience are yet denied to millions of people. Freedom of the Press in certain regions of the world is a hollow mockery. It is in this context that we must rededicate ourselves to the objectives and principles of the Charter.

Governmental action alone will not suffice. Governmental action must be supplemented by the education of public opinion to the need of the recognition of human rights. May I, therefore, remind you, on this occasion, that in the Preamble to the Charter it is "We the peoples" -- I underline "We the peoples" -- "of the United Nations" who "reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small". The standards of the Declaration become real when they are applied not only by Governments, but more particularly in local groups and communities within nations. I would therefore, on this occasion, make a special appeal to the non-governmental organizations, to community groups and to voluntary bodies to make this reaffirmation of faith in fundamental human rights a matter of conscience. It is then, and only then, that the common efforts of us all will help to achieve the noble aims of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The PRESIDENT: I have now the honour of making a statement on this occasion myself.

By a decision of this General Assembly, acting upon the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council, we are celebrating today -- as you have heard several times already and as all of you know -- the tenth anniversary of the proclamation by the General Assembly -- ten years ago today in Paris, at about one o'clock in the morning, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Both as President ten years ago of the Economic and Social Council, which submitted to the General Assembly in Paris the draft of the Declaration as prepared by the Human Rights Commission of which I was also then rapporteur, as Chairman then of the Third Committee which considered and revised the draft Declaration and thus prepared it for adoption by the Assembly, as Chairman for two years later on of the Human Rights Commission, and now as President of this session of the General Assembly, I propose to inquire briefly into the background, the character and the significance of this contemporary movement in the field of human rights.

Although the phrase "human rights" did not appear in the basic documents of the League of Nations, the League nevertheless did concern itself with certain aspects of this matter. One can discover in the text of articles 22 and 23 of the Covenant of the League material that deals with what we now call human rights, and the Peace Treaties declared the rights of linguistic, racial and religious minorities to be matters of international concern under the guarantee of the League. The League also actively dealt with questions of refugees, slavery, nationality and statelessness.

We may therefore conclude that there was some concern by the League of Nations for questions of human rights; that this concern was nevertheless rudimentary; that the human entity envisaged was for the most part a group, a territory, a people, a minority, a class, under special privative conditions, and not individual human beings everywhere and under all conditions; that peace and human rights were not directly linked in the underlying philosophy of the epoch; and that the promotion of human rights therefore was not one of the central purposes of the League of Nations.

Whatever the spiritual presuppositions of the League of Nations in this regard, by 1945 the whole international climate was saturated with the question

(The President)

of human rights. Four factors contributed to this: Nazi doctrine and practice with respect to the nature of man whereby race, force and arbitrary decision were regarded as ultimate grounds of discrimination; the Russian revolution whereby the economic and social needs and rights of man were stressed; the Atlantic Charter and the four freedoms of President Roosevelt; and the clamour by the dependent and colonial peoples for their right to self-determination. This saturated atmosphere precipitated itself at San Francisco in the Charter of the United Nations.

Unlike the Covenant of the League, the Charter of the United Nations is quite explicit in its central concern for human rights. It treats this question thematically and fundamentally. Human rights and fundamental freedoms are mentioned seven times in the Charter. The Preamble ~~reaffirms~~ reaffirming "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small," as second only to saving "succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Side by side with maintaining "international peace and security" the Charter declares that one of the purposes of the United Nations is "To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples", and another purpose "To achieve international co-operation ... in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms...".

Article 55 explicitly states that the promotion of "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms" creates "conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations." It follows from the word "necessary" according to this doctrine of the Charter, that without "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms..." there can be no "peaceful and friendly relations among nations". Article 55 therefore appears to be the strongest statement about human rights in the Charter.

Human rights constitute, then, one of the fundamental themes of the Charter, and peace itself is quite explicitly regarded as a function of human rights.

(The President)

Obligated by its very Charter to promote human rights, and indeed not only as an end in itself but because peace is so intimately bound up with this question, the United Nations had to set up a mechanism, an organ, through which it would discharge this obligation. Article 68 puts the United Nations under the explicit mandate to set up a Commission on Human Rights. The definitive Commission on Human Rights was established at the third session of the Economic and Social Council in 1946. Shortly thereafter the Human Rights Division of the Secretariat was organized, and I want to take this opportunity of paying a special tribute to the splendid contributions of this Division all these years.

The first Chairman of the Commission was Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, who served in that capacity for four years, and it is a well-known fact that the name, the interest, the diligence and the dignity she brought to its labours proved decisive in the early work of the Commission. I cannot let this occasion pass without paying tribute also to the valuable contributions of the other Chairmen who have served on the Commission so far, the late Mahmoud Azmi of Egypt, M. René Cassin of France, Mr. Felixberto Serrano of the Philippines and Mr. R.S.S. Gunewardene of Ceylon.

During 1947 and 1948 the Commission gradually came to grips with its task. Now the Charter speaks of promoting human rights and the Commission was set up to do just that. But the Charter nowhere tells you precisely what these rights are. It was as though everybody assumed that he knew all about them. But how can you promote the general, the undefined, that which you do not know? You are asked to do a job, but you are not told exactly what that job is.

The first task of the Commission, therefore, turned out to be precisely to fill out this blank left -- we must assume intentionally -- in the structure of the Charter, to supply just what human rights and fundamental freedoms the Members of the United Nations are, by their adherence to the Charter, obligated to "encourage" and "promote" and "observe".

This filling out of the blank in the Charter, this supplying of content and meaning to the phrase "human rights and fundamental freedoms", which would otherwise remain somewhat empty, was none other than the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which we are met this morning to celebrate. From the very beginning the Declaration was progressively built up on a firm international foundation wherein no regional philosophy or way of life was either overlooked or permitted to prevail.

The draft Declaration, as prepared by the Commission, came to the Assembly ten years ago from the Economic and Social Council. It can be shown that the Assembly went over the draft with the utmost care and with a deep sense of responsibility, and when it was finally adopted as we have it today -- by 48 votes in favour, none against and 8 abstentions -- it bore marks of authorship coming practically from every country in the world, certainly from every cultural tradition in the world. Through proper research, one can easily assign this comma or that semicolon or that word or that phrase or that order of words to the initiative of this or that country. And yet, despite this syncretism -- how else could international co-operation in the elaboration of documents take place? -- there is a remarkable unity of spirit about this text. This is the unity of spirit of this age about this matter. The civil, personal and political notions of the American and French Revolutions -- the formal aspect of the matter -- and the economic, social and cultural notions of the Russian Revolution -- the material aspect of the matter -- are reflected in the text of the Declaration in varying modes and degrees of relevance. The principles of Magna Carta and habeas corpus, together with the other emphasis, as practised in the British tradition of common law, upon the liberty and inviolability of the individual, are also clearly impressed upon the Declaration.

The Paris session of the Assembly of 1948 was soon characterized by many representatives as the Human rights session, and both the President of the Assembly, Dr. Evatt of Australia, and Mr. John Foster Dulles of the United States delegation stated then that the Declaration was the most important single achievement of that session.

The question may now be asked, what has been the influence, the story, the career, the fortunes of this document during this past decade?

The Declaration is the primary and highest international authority on human rights of this age. Every United Nations study or reporting in this field uses one or another text of the Declaration as its terms of reference. For about ten years now the United Nations has been trying to elaborate covenants on human rights, that is to say, legally binding international treaties in this field; and these covenants are wholly based on the Declaration. The specialized agencies either make explicit use of those provisions of the Declaration which define their field of competence or find implicit justification for their practice in those provisions. December 10 was adopted by the General Assembly as Human Rights Day and many countries have been celebrating it each year.

In many resolutions and recommendations of the United Nations the Declaration has been cited as a basis of action or as a standard of achievement, often side by side with the Charter. The Declaration has been significantly brought to bear upon the non-self-governing territories, both by the General Assembly and by the Trusteeship Council. I remember also a few years ago, when the cornerstone for this building was laid, that there was put in it a copy of both the Charter and the Declaration, so that this building is built upon the Charter and the Declaration. In administering Somaliland as a Trust Territory, Italy accepted the Declaration as a standard of achievement for that administration. The resolutions on South Africa and other resolutions on racial discrimination appeal to the Declaration. Resolutions on the status of women base themselves on the Declaration.

International conventions, as Mr. Cassin has just told us this morning, international conventions on refugees, on stateless persons, on the political rights of women, on the abolition of forced labour, on the nationality of married women, on the abolition of slavery and on discrimination in respect of employment and occupation have all made substantial use of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted in 1950 in Rome a Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms whose purpose was explicitly "the collective enforcement of certain of the rights stated in the Universal Declaration" and whose text was partly based on the text of the Declaration.

The Tenth International Conference of American States, meeting in Caracas in 1954, declared "the irrevocable adherence of the American States to the human rights agreed upon in the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights".

The Asian-African Conference, meeting in Bandung in 1955, "took note of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations".

In the Peace Treaty of 1951, Japan declares its intention "to strive to realize the objectives of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights". In the Special Statute for Trieste of 1954, Italy and Yugoslavia pledged themselves to "act in accordance with the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights". In the General Convention between France and Tunisia of 1955, "Tunisia grants all persons resident in its territory the rights and personal guarantees proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights".

The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Constitution of Haiti, the Provisional Constitution of Indonesia, the Constitution of Libya, the Constitution of Eritrea as an autonomous unit of Ethiopia, the Statute of Togoland under French Administration and the Constitution of Guinea, which we are shortly to welcome into the United Nations, all these bear witness to the direct influence of the Declaration.

The Governments of Paraguay, Argentina, Bolivia and Panama, and the Provincial Legislature of Ontario, Canada, all promulgated laws and decrees explicitly based on the Declaration.

The Universal Declaration, or one or another of its provisions, has been cited in a number of judicial decisions and opinions. For instance, it has been cited by the International Court of Justice, by the Supreme Court of the United States, by the Supreme Court of the Philippines, by the Supreme Court of the Netherlands, by the Supreme Courts of California and New York, and by lower courts in California, Belgium and Italy.

What I have listed so far are only some of the visible effects of the Declaration during the first decade of its existence. Its invisible effects upon the minds of men in clarifying their ideas, in setting up before them clear objectives at which to aim, in serving as a ferment of discontent, are impossible to gauge. And the visible effects themselves are mere external evidence of how much the Declaration must have already challenged and appealed and energized the mind of people to have supreme courts and legislatures and national constitutions and international conferences, conventions and treaties, and United Nations decisions, so critically make use of it. We may therefore assert that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted ten years in Paris, has exerted a modest but appreciable influence in both the international and the intellectual realms during these ten years.

Is the Declaration a perfect document? No, it is not a perfect document. Could the United Nations not have produced a better document? Ideally, it could, but this is the document it has produced, and one does his best with the given, with what is; and what is is much better than people think.

We saw that the Charter, for all its insistence on human rights and fundamental freedoms, left this matter somewhat suspended in midair. It did not tell the nations exactly what they were obligated to promote when they signed the Charter. Their signing, therefore, so far as this matter was concerned, involved an act of faith -- faith that the United Nations would sooner or later remedy this defect, supply this deficiency, fill out this glaring blank, and indeed do all this not in secret, not behind their backs, but right before their very eyes and with their active participation and consent. And this is exactly what happened when the Declaration was drawn up. Every nation had its say in the

matter at every stage in its development, and therefore the result which was adopted without a single dissenting vote can only be understood as a delayed but necessary completion of what was left incomplete at San Francisco. And even Mr. Vyshinsky, when he explained the Soviet abstention, did not criticize the Declaration as far as it went; he only wanted it to go farther, from his point of view, in the domain of economic and social rights.

It is possible to quibble about whether the Declaration has or has not legal, binding force. And in protecting one's Government in this delicate realm one usually makes the point that while the Charter was ratified by due constitutional process, the Declaration was a mere recommendation of the General Assembly and was not ratified like the Charter. But if my argument is valid, then the Declaration is not without some inherent legal force. For the critical question -- the critical question -- disturbingly persists before every Government: What did you precisely pledge yourself to do under the Charter in the field of human rights when you ratified the Charter and became a Member of the United Nations? This critical question faces every Government. I can conceive of more than one answer to this question, but if we are not secretly pledged to different things, the Declaration, which we have all helped to create as a common standard of achievement and which constitutes the common denominator to which we have all agreed, is the best answer.

But there is, my friends, one thing about which there can be no quibble. It is that the United Nations, after the most serious, the most intensive and the most responsible study, has now turned to every human being in the world and with one voice tells him: Look here, you have an inherent dignity and worth of our own as a human person; by your inalienable rights you are equal with every other human being; you are born free; you are endowed with reason and conscience; you should neither suffer nor practise discrimination; you have the right to life, liberty and security of person; you can never be held in slavery and servitude, nor can you be subjected to torture or degrading treatment; you have by nature such and such precise legal rights; you have by nature such and such precise personal rights; you have by nature such and such precise political rights; you have the right to own property and no one may arbitrarily deprive you of your property; you have the right to freedom of thought,

(The President)

conscience and religion, and to freedom of expression, assembly and association; as a member of society you have the right to social security; you are entitled by nature to such and such precise economic, social and cultural rights; you are entitled to a social and international order in which your personality can bloom; and remember, you have duties and not only rights -- duties to your community and duties to humanity at large.

My friends, about this clear, powerful, ringing message which the United Nations -- and not an armchair philosopher or a well-meaning jurist -- proclaims with one voice to every human being on the surface of the earth there can be no quibble whatsoever.

This is indeed a most significant thing. Never has organized humanity spoken with one voice so emphatically on the nature of man. The message does not come from this or that special religion, or this or that special culture, or this or that special outlook on the world. The message comes from the combined and considered views of all religions, all cultures and all outlooks, and the message assures man everywhere that there is something -- something spelled out in detail -- that belongs by nature to his essence, to his dignity, to his inherent worth as a human person, and that this something is a fit topic of concern to the international community.

(The President)

If this message, so strikingly and so authoritatively uttered, is not going to move every man in Asia, in Australasia, in Europe, in Africa, in the Western hemisphere, to consider what really makes him human; if this message is not going to move him, next, to compare what the United Nations tells him most solemnly that he is and must be by nature with what he is in actual fact; if this message is not going to make him further quite dissatisfied with himself and his condition; and -- "keeping this message constantly in mind" -- if this dissatisfaction is not going, finally, to move him to agitate and seek to change both himself and his conditions in the image of the message; then only force and compulsion descending upon him from outside are going to move him. But the United Nations -- whatever else it is -- is powerless to resort to force and compulsion; the United Nations acts only by consent and persuasion. The United Nations tells every man: while I cannot and do not want to change you by force, I at least give you the absolute assurance of what you are by nature; go ahead and be that!

There is implicit in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights a mighty ideological weapon. Alas, either because of fear or because of ignorance, or -- worse still -- because of false pride, this Declaration is not used enough. Let those who are at a loss for such weapons use it. Because humanity speaks through it in unison, there is no more potent or authoritative message in this field in the world. One can always say, after the most careful consideration, there was not a single vote cast against it.

This is a tremendous thing to be able to say. For the first time in history there is a universal definition of what belongs to man by nature. This is a source of the utmost zest to those who know. At its tenth anniversary today we have rightly rejoiced; but at its twentieth and its fiftieth anniversaries there will be greater rejoicing still. Let us therefore so take in now the wonderful message of this Declaration -- so apprehend and act on its truth -- as to be worthy of the greater rejoicing still to come.

We have also received a message from the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Republic in this connexion. We all remember our friend Mahmoud Azmi, who was the Chairman of the Human Rights Commission and who suddenly died on duty, as he was serving his country in the Security Council in 1954. I should like to read this statement from the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Republic,

(The President)

and I should like those of you who knew and who remember Mahmoud Azmi to think as though this statement were coming from him himself:

"The Declaration of Human Rights is one of the greatest and noblest accomplishments of the United Nations, and of such leaders of thought and endeavour as the late Dr. Mahmoud Azmi, whose name will be recalled with gratitude and mutual respect through eternity, during which there are going to be human rights and respect for them. During tedious years of hard and patient work, Dr. Azmi worked with unshakable determination for the recognition and the consecration of human rights by the United Nations in its solemn Declaration and in the Covenant. The achievement of this objective has fully justified all the efforts, the resourcefulness and the faith which were made to flow into it and which brought the United Nations to one of its most luminous pinnacles of success."

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.