



Tuesday, 21 September 1982,
at 3.25 p.m.

President: Mr. Imre HOLLAI (Hungary).

AGENDA ITEM 1

**Opening of the session by the Chairman
of the delegation of Iraq**

1. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT: I declare open the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

AGENDA ITEM 2

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

2. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT: As we observe a minute of silence in accordance with rule 62 of the rules of procedure, may we also on this occasion observe the International Day of Peace, proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/67 of 30 November 1981, to be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples. In doing so, however, I must recall, as I pointed out yesterday when I closed the thirty-sixth session, that it is self-evident that the world is not at peace—far from it. Conflicts persist in all parts of the globe. But perhaps uppermost in our minds at this moment is the horrible spectre of the hundreds of men, women and children slaughtered in the terrible massacres at the Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut. I feel sure, as we rise to observe the traditional minute of silent prayer or meditation, that on behalf of all of you I am conveying the sense of deep outrage felt by the entire international community and transmit to the families of the innocent victims our profound sense of sorrow and dismay.

3. I now invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The representatives observed a minute of silence.

AGENDA ITEM 3

Credentials of representatives to the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly:

(a) **Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee**

4. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT: Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly shall, at the beginning of each session on the proposal of the President, appoint a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

5. Accordingly, it is proposed that, for the thirty-seventh session, the Credentials Committee should

consist of the following Member States: Bahamas, China, the Dominican Republic, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Seychelles, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America. May I take it that the countries I have mentioned are hereby appointed members of the Credentials Committee?

It was so decided (decision 37/301).

AGENDA ITEM 4

Election of the President of the General Assembly

6. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT: I now invite the members of the General Assembly to proceed to the election of the President of the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

7. May I recall that, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 33/138, the President shall be elected from an Eastern European State this year. I have been informed by the Chairman of the group of Eastern European States that his group has endorsed the candidacy of Mr. Imre Hollai of Hungary for the presidency of the General Assembly.

8. Taking into account the provisions of paragraph 16 of annex VI to the rules of procedure, I therefore declare Mr. Imre Hollai of Hungary elected President of the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly by acclamation.

Mr. Imre Hollai (Hungary) was elected by acclamation President of the General Assembly (decision 37/302).

9. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT: May I be the first to extend my sincerest congratulations to Mr. Imre Hollai on his election and I invite him to assume the presidency.

Mr. Hollai took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Imre Hollai, President of the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly

10. The PRESIDENT: May I be permitted to say first of all how deeply moved I am by the confidence you have placed in me by electing me to the presidency of the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I offer my sincere thanks to the group of Eastern European States for their unanimous stand in favour of my candidacy and I express my thanks to all the delegations that supported my election to this high and honourable post.

11. And now, in the name of the General Assembly and in my own name, I pay a tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Ismat Kittani, who during the past year

has guided us through the thirty-sixth and the resumed thirty-sixth sessions with the greatest ability and the utmost dedication. It will not be easy for me to succeed him as President.

12. I am fully aware that the confidence representatives have reposed in my person is addressed primarily to my country and people, to a country which could become a Member of the United Nations only as late as 1955 because the international atmosphere at that time was no less precarious than it is now. Though the record of my country's progress is not exceptional, my country still looks to the future with confidence even under the present difficult international circumstances. The Hungarian People's Republic and its people owe their achievements not only to their zeal and diligence but to the benefits of committing themselves to co-operation with others rather than to isolation. They are ready to co-operate not only with friendly socialist countries pursuing the same objectives and building the same social system, but with every country that is not seeking to benefit at the expense of others. My country wishes to work together with all States that adhere, as it does, to the noble purposes and principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and profess the desire to solve the problems facing the community of nations in that spirit. It is contributing, commensurate with its strength and possibilities, to the common efforts for disarmament and international peace and security, for economic and social progress and for friendship and co-operation among peoples.

13. The President is rightly expected at the opening of the session to outline his approach to his duties and his views on the functions of the Organization and on the agenda items to be considered at the session. Emulating my predecessors, I would like to share with you some of my thoughts and ideas on the issues before us.

14. I do not regard the agenda of the General Assembly simply as a mirror reflecting the problems and contradictions of the world today. I should like this mirror to reflect the perspective for the future as well. This can only be done if we search together for the ways and means to solve current problems with good will and with faith in the future, discarding every bias and prejudice in the process. Active good will must prevail to guide our actions. In order to move forward we must show realism when assessing our situation and the scope of our actions.

15. Here I should like to be somewhat personal. I have been in the diplomatic service for more than 30 years, during the last decade of which I have been closely and continuously associated with the United Nations. My personal experience here has taught me once and for all not to believe in miracles. Nor do I believe that we are here to discover a panacea, an instant cure for all the chronic and acute ailments of the community of nations. Nevertheless, I sincerely believe in the noble purposes and principles that are enshrined in the Charter. I believe that by acting in their spirit the common political will of Member States can expedite the solution of the questions on the agenda. I wish to assure the Assembly that it is my fervent endeavour to discharge the responsibilities of my office in that spirit. I count upon the Secretary-General, the Vice-Presidents, the Chairmen of the

Main Committees and all delegations to extend to me their constructive support so that I may carry out my duties as President towards that end.

16. We are living in disquieting times fraught with tension. Certain trends in world politics are causing legitimate concern. Mankind wants peace, because peace alone can provide a more affluent and meaningful life. Yet war tension is increasing. What we need is a deeper understanding of each other in order to cope with the problems confronting us. Yet those in some circles insist on pursuing a policy of strength. The rational majority is anxious to eliminate the threat of war and to achieve disarmament, yet we are witness to the arms race gathering a new momentum. New areas of tension are being added to the existing ones that still have to be rooted out. Fresh ills are troubling the community of nations and aggravating old ills for which no cure-all has yet been found. In the last few decades steps of historic importance have been taken to eliminate the colonial system once and for all, but the legacy of the colonial past is still strong enough to flare up in new armed conflicts. This makes it even more urgent to find political solutions and not to resort to force when controversial issues confront us. The pages of the book of history of mankind since the dawn of civilization admonish us that wars only complicate issues and do not come to grips with the crux of conflicts.

17. On a memorable day 25 years ago the first Sputnik was launched into orbit. It opened up new horizons for man and his knowledge of the universe. Lately some have been abusing this wider perspective for military purposes so that it imperils the future of us all.

18. Ever since weapons acquired their frightening efficiency men of vision have had forebodings about the future of mankind. I should like to quote a countryman of mine, Mor Jokai, a writer of romantic historical novels and a contemporary of Emile Zola and Lev Tolstoy. At the Congress of the Inter-Parliamentary Union held in August 1895 in Brussels, Jokai described his harrowing vision of a global military conflict:

“No stretch of imagination can conjure up the aftermath of a future war to be fought by millions of people . . . not with firearms, but with veritably diabolic machines; a war involving all nations, whether large or small...”

19. I am persuaded that to listen to our hearts and minds means putting our trust in the power of common sense and doing our utmost to preserve peace. I stand by those who are willing to undertake even unilateral commitments to demonstrate their readiness for peace and who bring with them to the conference table new, constructive proposals for disarmament. I number myself among those who hold that the policy of peace and détente has no—and can have no—rational alternative in our day. Let me quote Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, our contemporary, a Nobel Prize laureate of Hungarian origin, who was the first to extract vitamin C from peppers commonly called paprika in my country. This great scientist and humanitarian became aware that vitamin C was being produced not only for human consumption, but for military purposes as well. Speaking at Falmouth in

1962, Albert Szent-Gyorgyi voiced a warning that is still valid today:

“If we give up our peace race, then our name may not go down in history as that of the people who prepared the atomic war, simply because there will be no history at all—only lunar desolation.”

20. It is clear, therefore, from what I have said, that I place the emphasis on those items on our crowded agenda that are directly or indirectly related to peace and international security. The highest priority, in my view, is disarmament. The negotiation of this issue has lost much of its momentum recently. I do not think I am wrong when I blame this on the deterioration of the international atmosphere and on the further erosion of confidence and trust. In this situation, even an iota of progress would stimulate confidence and a better atmosphere.

21. We all know that the responsibility for disarmament, a responsibility reaffirmed by the Charter, is shared by the great Powers. Many are hopefully watching for a change for the better in relations between the Soviet Union and the United States of America and for a new impulse towards disarmament. Let me join the representatives of countries that are not guided by great-Power responsibility but merely answer the call of realism and reason.

22. There is no need to list in order of priority the problems pertaining to disarmament, arms limitation and a halt to the arms race. I trust that this session will contribute towards the realization of proposals submitted at the second special session on disarmament and entrusted to the Geneva Committee on Disarmament for substantive consideration. After the special session last July, a number of questions and proposals were left open for substantive discussion and decisions.

23. The numerous unresolved regional crises on the agenda cannot be related to a common denominator. Many of them have roots in the distant past. This forum has already adopted resolutions that provide a key to a solution, but the fact that they have still not been implemented has further aggravated the situation and has caused even more pain and suffering. In other cases, the very existence of the crisis situation is to be questioned. I have in mind the inclusion in the agenda of items on so-called crisis situations that produced nothing but sterile debate and diverted attention from the real crises threatening the world with an escalation of the conflict. The sterile debates I have alluded to are in the meantime made redundant by the peoples concerned when exercising their right to self-determination and consolidating all spheres of their national life.

24. There is but one possible way to eliminate the hotbeds of tension. It is defined in Article 1 of the Charter as one of the purposes of the United Nations: “to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace.” Interpreting this objective of the Organization, I would add for my part that the fate of millions of people may depend on the settlement of those disputes. We are therefore duty bound to pay attention to the legitimate interests of the people or peoples concerned.

I maintain that nothing can absolve from responsibility those who try to solve a conflict by the extermination of a people, as we have witnessed in the recent past. Similarly, I regard any reference whatsoever to spheres of big-Power interest or zones of influence to be an inadmissible line of approach. I am firmly convinced that only a solution acceptable to all parties involved can put an end to a dispute or conflict, and only if it guarantees the peoples concerned the right and the opportunity to shape their own destiny. We still have to create conditions favourable to just and peaceful settlements.

25. The United Nations has made a historic contribution to the process of decolonization. Former colonies have won national independence. The ceremonial hoisting of new flags in front of United Nations Headquarters does not, however, mean that the process has ended. The struggle for political and economic independence goes on as long as there are Territories where peoples are not yet their own masters. The Namibian people are still waiting for independence, even though the Organization bears a direct responsibility for their future. The plan of settlement which all of us regarded as feasible is still only a piece of Xeroxed paper. The legitimate struggle goes on until national independence is won. The solution for several other Territories—some larger, some smaller—is still incumbent upon us. There is still much to be done, yet the rate of progress has slowed down. All of us are familiar with the interests and forces that impede a solution. The responsibility to overcome these obstacles concerns us all.

26. The emergence of the movement of non-aligned nations is a major result of the struggle to do away with the colonial system and of the political process in the post-Second World War period. That movement covers a wide spectrum; the newly independent countries have an active presence in the international arena. With its distinctive features and co-operative partnership with other progressive forces, the movement has become an important element in world politics.

27. In addition to the cares that I have already mentioned that weigh on our minds, we are all affected in varying degrees by the symptoms of the world economy: the slowdown in the rate of economic growth, higher unemployment, inflation, drastic fluctuations in world market prices and adverse terms of credit.

28. Those symptoms are further aggravated by some that add to political tension by imposing economic sanctions and embargoes. Events have shown this to be a double-edged weapon. The list of countries encumbered by adverse economic trends is growing. As the sources available for development continue to decrease, so grows the impatience of the developing countries. That impatience is justified. It is in our common interest to change the obsolete patterns of the world economy which grew out of inequalities and subordination. The objectives motivating a new international economic order are indicative of the awareness that the national and political stability of developing countries is conditioned by, among other things, a stable economy.

29. In the process of restructuring international economic relations the developing countries will

realize that unless they also restructure their own economies to rid themselves of the discrepancies left over from their unilateral dependence in the past, the aid from other countries will not be fully effective.

30. Some people have qualms about the practicality of strategies for the successive United Nations Development Decades. I see no grounds for such qualms. Some public statements and concrete action in the international sphere have made it evident who is barring progress and why.

31. As regards the agenda items relating to the world economy, it would perhaps be more purposeful to start from the premise that the negative phenomena reveal with greater emphasis the elements of common interest. Understanding of this common interest will prompt us to intensify co-operation in the fields of new sources of energy, streamlining the infrastructure and protecting the environment, to mention but a few, for which the Organization provides an appropriate forum.

32. The history of civilization is the history of social progress, even if marked by pitfalls and setbacks. Our task is to promote that progress by tackling the social and human rights questions on the agenda. As we know from history, the march of universal progress can be temporarily retarded by the crimes of individuals, and it can be propelled forward by the deeds of great men, but the course of progress has always been charted by the millions of people. Today the essential criteria of progress are, among others, a definite end to the gross and mass violations of human rights, an end to *apartheid* and discrimination based on race, religion or language and an end to the subjugation of nationalities or whole nations.

33. Having shared these thoughts with representatives, I feel it is hardly necessary to express in detail my views on the functions of the Organization. This multifarious gathering of nations will live up to expectations if its Members show respect for each

other's culture and human values. In this deliberation of equals let us give preference to good, positive ideas, whether they be put forward by representatives of small or of large countries. This is our way of serving properly the cause of individual nations and the community of nations. The United Nations will be what we all make of it.

34. This is particularly true of the current session of the General Assembly. If during the next three months we join efforts to encourage and facilitate negotiations and to impart a fresh impetus to reviving the spirit of constructive co-operation, to promote the cause of disarmament, to move closer to the just and peaceful settlement of crises, to advance the process of decolonization, to make headway in establishing a system of economic relations based on mutual advantage and to promote social progress, we shall have accomplished no small deed and we shall have made our contribution to giving mankind a new sense of security in this harassed world and more confidence in the future.

AGENDA ITEM 110

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations: Report of the Committee on Contributions

35. The PRESIDENT: I should like, in keeping with the established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/37/461, which contains a letter addressed to me by the Secretary-General in which he informs the Assembly that two Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter. May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of that information?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.