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THE KOREAN QUESTION

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to circulate herewith to the Members of the General Assembly, for information, the text of a communication dated 10 January 1954, addressed to the President of the General Assembly by the Government of India.

54-01224

COMMUNICATION DATED 10 JANUARY 1954, ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

The Government of India have the honour to refer to A/RESOLUTION/173 adopted at the 470th plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 8 December 1953.

2. It may be recalled that the resolution arose out of the initiative of the Indian delegation. In view of the situation and developments in Korea, the delegation refrained, on the one hand, from pressing for a full debate on agenda item 18 (a) during the sitting of the Assembly and, on the other, desired the Assembly to be reconvened on 9 February 1954 for the same reasons. As a result of the proceedings in the Committee and agreements reached, the present resolution was jointly submitted by Brazil and India and adopted by the Assembly without opposition.

3. Sub-paragraph (b) of paragraph 2 of the said resolution provides for a Member State to make a request to the President of the General Assembly for the reconvening of the Assembly "by reason of developments in respect of the Korean question".

4. The Government of India, as you are aware, are much involved and concerned by the developments in respect of the Korean question by reason of India's chairmanship of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and the presence of the Custodial Force of India in the demilitarized zone. They are also much concerned about the Korean question as a whole in view of the fact that little progress in the direction of the objectives of the United Nations has been made since the signature of the Armistice Agreement.

5. The Government of India are fully aware of the endeavours that have been made to bring about the Political Conference which, however, has not only not met, but there appears little prospect of its being convened in the near future.

6. In respect of repatriation, the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission has been able to implement the Repatriation Agreement only to a limited extent. Any fuller implementation of the Repatriation Agreement, or endeavour to that end, is possible only by agreement between or with the two Commands in respect of the extension of the periods of explanation and custody and the consideration of alternative procedures by them in regard to status and disposition of prisoners in view of the Political Conference not being convened.

7. The Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission has repeatedly made suggestions and requests to both sides to seek such agreements and, finally, letters to each side dated 2 January 1954 requested firm answers to questions relating to the above matters.

8. The Commission has received answers from both sides. They do not offer any basis for further or fuller implementation of the Repatriation Agreement. On the other hand, they place beyond doubt the position that the Custodial Force of India would have to cease custody on 23 January and the dissolution of the Commission must take place before 23 February.

9. The Government of India have, after careful and anxious consideration, advised their representative, the Chairman of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission, that, in the circumstances that obtain, the two Commands should be informed that (a) the Commission and the Custodial Force of India cannot but cease custodial function and duties on 23 January; (b) the Commission cannot but effect its dissolution before 23 February; and (c) the Commission can neither release the prisoners nor "declare their relief to civilian status" or decide as to their disposition.

10. The Government of India consider that the only lawful, correct and peaceful course that the Commission can adopt in the context of the situation that confronts it is to restore the unrepatriated prisoners of war to former and respective detaining sides. The Government of India have advised their representative, the Chairman of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission, accordingly.

11. The Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission has submitted interim reports to the two Commands and will no doubt make its final report before its dissolution.

12. The procedures laid down in the repatriation Agreement and its processes having been implemented but to a limited extent, the Commission having found itself incapacitated from further implementation of them and incapacitated from making any decision on the status and disposition of prisoners, the Government of India having found themselves therefore obliged to advise their representative, the Chairman of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission, that the only correct and peaceful course is to restore to prisoners the status quo ante, the Government of India consider that the Korean problem must now be considered by the Assembly

both in respect of the working of the Commission and the issues which it has found itself incapacitated from resolving.

13. The Government of India also consider that the main aim of the United Nations in Korea, namely, the settlement of the Korean question, has made little progress since the signing of the armistice. The negotiations in respect of the Political Conference have reached deadlock, the armistice rests uneasily on the basis of two sides remaining on a war footing, and threats of violence menace even this uneasiness and armed stalemate.

14. The Government of India have always exercised much caution and restraint in their approach to this question and in making any proposals in regard to it, having regard to the complexity and gravity of the issues involved.

15. In view, however, of the position of the prisoners of war issue as set out herein and India's special responsibility in respect of it both as Chairman of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and the role of the Custodial Force of India in Korea, the Government of India feel that the consideration of the Korean question by the General Assembly should take place in reasonable time before the dissolution of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission.

16. Further, the deadlock in respect of the Political Conference and the lack of any other step which would help towards settlement of the Korean question also renders consideration of it by the Assembly necessary, appropriate and urgent.

17. The Government of India request you, Madame President, on whom the General Assembly has placed the responsibility of reconvening the eighth session, to do so at an early date and in reasonable time prior to the dissolution of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission.

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