

number of regional conflicts, their escalation into global conflict has been avoided. Even on the most difficult question of disarmament and arms limitation a number of agreements have in fact been reached.

The United Nations Development Programme, together with the specialized agencies, has come to represent a vital source of economic and technical assistance for developing countries. The United Nations Children's Fund has brought life and hope to millions of children and mothers and is the leading influence in furthering technological and communication advances that can bring a virtual survival revolution for children in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The specialized agencies have, in their various fields of activity, made major contributions to the alleviation of global problems.

The United Nations has provided authoritative definitions of the fundamental rights and freedoms which all human beings should enjoy. It is responsible for the development of the Convention on the Law of the Sea which provides a broadly accepted new régime for the oceans. In the past 40 years more has been done by the United Nations in codifying international law than in all the previous years of history together. Millions of refugees have gained protection and assistance through United Nations instruments and agencies; international humanitarian activity and concern have been mobilized on an unprecedented scale; guidelines have been established to deal with many of the most critical problems of our time, and the Governments and peoples of the world have been sensitized to their importance through the great international conferences and programmes which the United Nations has sponsored, the most recent of which was the International Conference on Population held in August this year.

All of these accomplishments required a multilateral structure of co-operation. Moreover, in some situations the United Nations, or the Secretary-General, remains essential to communication between the parties. I think, for example, of Cyprus, over which at this moment I am engaged in a new effort to find a just solution; of Afghanistan, the Iran/Iraq war and South-East Asia. The critical value of peace-making and peace-keeping efforts would be instantly evident if they were to cease. It is essential, in considering our problems, to remember the positive side of the United Nations account and to keep in perspective politically-motivated criticism.

However, for all of the accomplishments of the past decades, and they have been major, the fact of the matter is that the three main elements of a stable international order — an accepted system of maintaining international peace and security; disarmament and arms limitation; and the progressive development of a just and effective system of international economic relations — have yet to take hold as they should.

In dealing with the most vital problems of the widest concern, we often witness heated rhetoric rather than a reasoned co-operative approach. In such an atmosphere, which extends far beyond the Organization, the United Nations, which should be used to provide constructive solutions, provides a convenient target of criticism.

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The United Nations reflects in a unique way the aspirations and frustrations of many nations and groups all over the world. One of its great merits is that all nations — including the weak, the oppressed and the victims of injustice — can get a hearing and have a platform even in the face of the hard realities of power. A just cause, however frustrated or disregarded, can find a voice in the United Nations. This is not always a well-liked attribute of the Organization, but it is an essential one.

What needs to be studied in the light of experience is whether present practices in the United Nations are in all instances best suited to promote concrete and just solutions and strengthen confidence in an Organization the essence of which is its universality. If confrontations in the deliberative organs are carried too far, either by one side or the other, they destroy the possibility of a consensus which could form the basis for practical action. I am totally in sympathy with the pursuit of just aspirations, however great the difficulties. But for the good of all, as well as of the United Nations itself, we should assess very carefully the most effective and correct method of using the Organization. The United Nations is a willing and patient horse, but it should not be ridden to a standstill without thought of the consequences.

We should beware of blurring the separate and specific functions of the main organs and specialized agencies by treating them as interchangeable platforms for pursuing the same political aims. Issues must be dealt with primarily on their own merits and in their own context. Otherwise the fever of one or two issues can pervade the entire body politic of the United Nations.

The non-implementation of resolutions, as well as their proliferation, has tended to downgrade the seriousness with which Governments and the public take the decisions of the United Nations. Very often the only outcome of such a process is to ask the Secretary-General to make yet another report to the next session, thus perpetuating a stalemate which, to be resolved, requires governmental and inter-governmental action. This process, and the almost automatic repetition of some agenda items and debates, is expensive and time-consuming both in terms of meetings and documentation, as well as often being ineffective in terms of practical results. I believe that such tendencies have been debilitating to the efforts of the Organization in the cause of peace and economic co-operation. I hope that Member States, even during the forthcoming session of the General Assembly, will give serious thought to the best way of doing business.

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Two years ago in my first annual report I made a series of suggestions as to how the Charter system of international peace and security might be made to work better. Although the Security Council has devoted many hours of thoughtful consultations to these and related ideas, concrete results are still needed for which the impetus must come from the highest political levels. I feel that the realization of the full potential of the United Nations depends upon a willingness to take active steps to experiment with new approaches.

In recent years the collective capacity and influence of the Security Council have been insufficiently tested. There are important issues where the members of the Council, including the permanent members, hold substantially similar views. And yet other factors not directly related to these problems inhibit the Council from exerting collective influence as envisaged in the Charter.

The same consideration applies to peace-keeping. We are often urged to strengthen the peace-keeping capacity of the United Nations, the implication being that this is a matter that can be handled without regard to the political relations of Member States and particularly of members of the Security Council. A number of lessons have been learned recently about the nature of peace-keeping, but it is essential to emphasize the fundamental issue. Peace-keeping is an expression of international political consensus and will. If that consensus or will is weak, uncertain, divided or indecisive, peace-keeping operations will be correspondingly weakened. There are occasions when the differences among members of the Security Council even make it impossible to