

## 41. UNITED NATIONS AND PEACEKEEPING

### BACKGROUND

In recent years a variety of schemes aimed at strengthening the structure and processes of the United Nations have been proposed. For example, in his 1986 Annual Report, Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar suggested that a war-risk reduction centre be established under the auspices of the United Nations to provide early warning of potential conflict situations. In September 1988, the Soviet Union put forward a series of reforms aimed at enhancing the role of the United Nations in collective security, including proposals to hold periodic meetings of the Security Council at the foreign minister level, and to give greater support to the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. The Soviet Union also called for the revival of the Military Staff Committee and suggested that it assist the Council in the strategic direction of peacekeeping operations. In his 1989 Annual Report, Secretary-General de Cuellar proposed regular, high-level meetings of the Security Council to review situations of potential and actual conflict.

The resurgence of peacekeeping operations and the expectation that the United Nations will be required to conduct more operations, including ones relating to intra-state, as well as inter-state conflict, have focussed attention on the need to strengthen peacekeeping procedures, as well as the capabilities of the Office of the Secretary-General. In turn, the renewed interest in peacekeeping has led experienced diplomats and commentators into a discussion of the broader activities of the United Nations and its potential as the central organization in an international security system. Such discussions have tended to emphasize the many areas of responsibility of the United Nations, which range widely from early warning of potential conflicts, preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacemaking to the promotion and codification of human rights, and development cooperation. This range of activities has led to calls for greater coordination of UN activities, and to suggestions that the United Nations is uniquely placed to provide leadership in building a system of "cooperative security."

In 1991 this discussion took place in part in the context of the search for a successor to Secretary-General de Cuellar. Attention has also been directed, therefore, to the human resources and requirements of the United Nations. Two distinguished former UN civil servants, Brian Urquhart and Erskine Childers, for example, proposed a fundamental reform of the Office of the Secretary-General. They advocated the appointment of several deputy Secretaries-General with functional responsibilities for peace and security, economic and social issues, and administration and management. In their view, a streamlined senior echelon would be joined by the heads of the key UN agencies to form an "international cabinet for an energetic,