

REPORT FROM THE SECURITY COUNCIL



Namibia Joins the UN

■ On 17 April, the Security Council unanimously endorsed Namibia's application to become the 160th member of the United Nations. The event marked the culmination of fourteen years of international diplomacy in which Canada played a prominent role. In the words of Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuellar, it was a demonstration of "how, with unity in aim and coherence of effort, multilateralism can be both fruitful and dynamic."

Central America

■ Reflective of the renewed dynamism of the world body are the efforts now underway in Central America. On 27 March, the Security Council unanimously voted to expand the size and role of the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA). The force, which numbered 260 troops, including a contingent of Canadians, was increased to about 1,060. Venezuela contributed the largest number of the new troops.

ONUCA's original duties had been limited to verifying the cut-off of aid to the Contra rebels, and patrolling borders to prevent guerrilla attacks. ONUCA's new mandate called for collecting weapons, ammunition, military equipment and uniforms from the Contras. Under the terms of the new mandate, rebels in Honduras were to be demobilized at already existing camps there. Rebels in Nicaragua, would go to temporary assembly points ("security zones") protected by ONUCA forces.

"There should be no doubt in anyone's mind about the position of the United States on the ques-

tion of the Contras," James Wilkinson, the US envoy, told the Council at the time. "We want and encourage them to demobilize freely and return to their land to contribute to its development."

Despite the US support for the Council's action, as of 1 May, Contra leaders in Nicaragua continued to insist they wouldn't lay down their arms until the Sandinistas relinquished power over the Nicaraguan military. Contras in Honduras cooperated with ONUCA and voluntarily demobilized, but the bulk of the Contra force remained in Nicaragua. On 20 April, the Council once again expanded ONUCA's mandate to include monitoring a ceasefire that had gone into effect the day before. It followed an agreement between representatives of the newly-elected government of Nicaragua, the Contras, and the Archbishop of Managua.

One other Latin American issue briefly held the attention of the Council. On 9 February, it met to hear a complaint from Cuba that a US Coast Guard vessel had fired on a Cuban-chartered freighter in the Gulf of Mexico while attempting to search the ship for drugs. Cuba portrayed the US as a "modern-day buccaneer." The US responded that the attack was legal because Washington had been granted the permission to board the freighter by Panama, the ship's flag state.

The Council adjourned without considering a resolution. Several Council members suggested it was unlikely that further action would be taken because the US action was not viewed as a serious violation of international law.

Middle East

■ On 15 March, the Council met to consider allegations that Israel intends to settle Soviet Jewish emigres in the Occupied Territories. It's estimated that 50,000 to

100,000 Soviet Jews will immigrate this year to Israel. The meeting had been called at the request of the Soviet Union whose delegate urged Israel to make a "sober assessment of the situation." He said the settlement of immigrants in the Occupied Territories was a new and serious obstacle to peace. The issue, he said, was not whether the Soviet Union should cut-off emigration. Rather, the responsibility lay with Israel.

The Palestine Liberation Organization's representative accused Israel of usurping Palestinian land, adding that Jews were arriving from "all parts of the world to replace Palestinians in the homeland." Israel replied that the accusation was "preposterous" and an attempt by Arab states to create a "diplomatic storm" in order to halt Jewish immigration to Israel.

At a subsequent meeting on 29 March, Canadian Ambassador Yves Fortier urged Israel to settle new immigrants exclusively within its pre-1967 borders, adding that Canada did not recognize "the permanence" of Israeli control over the Occupied Territories. "Canada will oppose, and will continue to oppose, any actions taken by the Israeli Government to alter the demographic structure of the occupied territories, particularly in the coming months," Fortier said.

The meeting was adjourned by the president of the Council who said the debate would be resumed at a future, unspecified date.

Iran and Iraq

■ On 27 February, in an effort to nudge along peace talks between Iran and Iraq, the Council called on the two countries to "cooperate fully" with the Secretary-General in his efforts to hold direct talks between the two countries.

In a statement, the Council expressed its support for proposals by the Secretary-General for a new round of talks under his auspices for a two-month period and with a specific agenda. The

agenda hasn't been made public but is said to contain eight points that are aimed at ensuring the implementation of Resolution 598 that forms the basis of the UN ordered peace settlement.

On 29 March, the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIMOG) for six months. During this meeting, the Secretary-General told Council members he "expects" that both governments are "determined to take advantage of the opportunity and the momentum created by the Security Council's statement of 27 February." But he also called on the two sides to notify him of their acceptance of the proposed agenda "and to give added political impetus to the talks by indicating to each other their sincerity and their determination to implement Resolution 598."

Cyprus

■ In other UN sponsored negotiations, the Council on 12 March, called on the two Cypriot communities to pursue efforts towards the creation of an independent, sovereign and non-aligned federal republic. The call came after a week-long round of negotiations in New York failed to elicit agreement between Mr. Rauf Denktash – the leader of the Turkish Cypriots, and Mr. George Vassiliou – the president of the Republic of Cyprus.

Assessing the talks, the Secretary-General reported to the Council that "in the circumstances, I came to the conclusion, regrettably, that we faced an impasse of a substantive kind, which raised questions regarding the essence of the mandate of good offices given to me by the Security Council and, therefore, regarding the basis of the talks." □

– TREVOR ROWE