

From the point of view of international law and accepted practices governing conduct between law-abiding sovereign nations, the Soviet Union in this incident has been guilty of outlaw behavior.

It is widely accepted, in international law, that the principle of proportionality applies. The action of the Soviet Union in dealing with this incident is without doubt in total contravention of this principle. Moreover, the Soviet action, in the absence of any state of hostility or even heightened international tension in the area, makes it all the more unjustifiable.

It would be ludicrous for the Soviet Union to pretend that it had to massacre 269 civilians, travelling on a civilian aircraft, to protect its sovereignty. The opening of fire on the Korean aircraft was in excess of what is commensurate with the gravity of the threat represented by the presence of a civilian aircraft in the Soviet air space and, therefore, the Soviet Union has infringed a basic principle of international law.

The United Nations and its system of international organizations has the ability and machinery in place to undertake the task before us. It remains for the Security Council to provide the impetus to ensure that it is undertaken and completed promptly and effectively. On behalf of my Government, I should like to suggest a three-part programme of action for consideration.

First, we consider it essential that there be a full and impartial inquiry into the incident to determine all the relevant facts and circumstances. This will demand the complete and open cooperation not only of those states directly involved in this tragic incident, but also of those like Canada who have a deep humanitarian concern, whether stemming from the deaths of their own citizens or more broadly based on their basic respect for human values. We consider that the UN Secretary-General is best placed to carry out this function and that it should be completed as rapidly as possible. The Secretary-General should be asked to report back to the Council as a matter of the utmost urgency.