

East and no fewer than 34 on questions related to southern Africa. To what purpose was all that time and effort, not to mention money, expended? The answer is surely "very little", because many of those resolutions simply expressed moral judgments and were devoid of practical proposals for action. Furthermore, everyone knew they had little, if any, prospect of being implemented. Yet the vast and increasingly expensive machinery of the UN ground on, not only through the 50-odd resolutions I have mentioned but through nearly 200 more, many in the same category and thus predestined to suffer the same fate. Already gathering dust, I suspect, is the 400-page compendium of these resolutions, most echoing almost word for word the deliberations of previous years.

No one should be surprised at the indifference with which the media and public greet their publication. By passing more resolutions, we have succeeded, paradoxically, in ensuring that they receive less, not more, attention. Changing our collective habits will not be easy. We should scrutinize the agenda closely to resist the automatic re-inscription of old items and the addition of less-essential new ones. We should group items so that similar debates will not take place in different committees on closely-related subjects. We should avoid the proliferation of resolutions that express the members' aspirations or objectives but do not contribute in a practical way to achieving them. A few short, precise and practical resolutions will have more impact than the many rambling and ineffective ones we now consider each year.

Security Council

As a member once each decade of the Security Council, Canada has accumulated some experience but also had a chance to take a fresh look at its activities every time we return. So far this year, the Council has debated several significant issues in a sensible, restrained fashion. None of us would claim, however, that it has done much to enhance its position as the UN organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Our Secretary-General has wisely warned us of the risk that there may come "a time when the Council is desperately needed and will be found to be too weak to fulfil its responsibilities". The problems arise not because of weaknesses in the Council's structure or powers but rather from a lack of impetus. To give a greater sense of purpose to the Council, the Charter provides for periodic meetings at which members could be represented by a Cabinet member or other specially-designated representative. Remarkably, the Council held the first such meeting in its history at the time of the twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations. This Assembly welcomed the Council's intention to hold further periodic meetings, but none has taken place.

I propose that the Security Council should begin meeting regularly at ministerial level. Fifteen ministers meeting together could give a new sense of life and political purpose to the Council. Instead of following a formal agenda, they could have a free discussion of major issues of international peace and security, based on a special report by the Secretary-General. The meetings should be held in an informal atmosphere, without a small army of advisers, thus allowing the ministers to exchange views informally. Meetings at ministerial level should be held once or twice a year, rather than once every 25 years. The first meeting might well be devoted to finding ways to make the work of the Council more relevant to the major issues of peace and security.