

The Secretary-General observed that the principle embodied in the first of these three points was reflected in the Assembly's various resolutions calling for the withdrawal of troops behind the armistice lines. Expression had been given to the second when UNEF's terms of reference were drawn up. There had been "no intent in the establishment of the Force to influence the military balance in the present conflict and thereby the political balance affecting efforts to settle the conflict". The Force, moreover, was not to have "military functions exceeding those necessary to secure peaceful conditions on the assumption that the parties to the conflict take all necessary steps for compliance with the recommendations of the General Assembly". In conformity with the third point the Assembly in its November 2 resolution had urged the parties to observe their armistice agreement scrupulously.

This agreement gave to Egypt "control" of the Gaza strip, which included responsibility for administration and security. The administration of the area could be legally changed only through settlement between the parties, and the United Nations was thus precluded from accepting even the non-military administration of the Gaza strip which Israel had offered to maintain there. Any widening of United Nations administrative responsibilities in the Gaza strip, beyond the responsibility it already has for the crowded refugee population, would have to be based on agreement with Egypt. The Assembly might recommend a United Nations administration, but it would lack the authority to require compliance. Deployment of UNEF in Gaza would require the consent of Egypt if it were planned to give the Force in this area any broader function than it had already been assigned along the armistice line in the Sinai Peninsula.

The Secretary-General reasserted his belief that a restoration of more stable relations between the parties could be based on a reaffirmation of the first article of the armistice agreement which is a pledge of non-aggression. The reaffirmation should extend to other articles as well. The Secretary-General mentioned in particular articles 7 and 8 of the agreement. Under Article 7 Egypt and Israel are permitted to have only very limited armed forces in the neighbourhood of the Gaza strip and south of it. Article 8 provides for demilitarization of the El Auja zone and stipulates that no Egyptian defensive position facing the demilitarized zone shall be closer than El Ghouseima and Abu Aweigila. These two articles, which were intended to reduce the danger of armed clashes, had been progressively undermined in recent years and were not being fulfilled when the crisis was reached.

The Secretary-General reminded the Assembly that execution of the provisions of the armistice agreement was to be supervised by a Mixed Armistice Commission, over which a senior officer of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization presides. Headquarters of the Mixed Armistice Commission have been at El Auja, the main intersection point for desert roads east of the Sinai Peninsula, in the demilitarized zone on Israel's side of the old Egypt-Palestine border. The functions of UNEF, now being used to secure and supervise the cease-fire, had therefore to be discussed as the way opened up for it to take positions along the armistice line. In this connection the Secretary-General said:

The United Nations Emergency Force is deployed at the dividing line between the forces of Israel and Egypt. The General Assembly concurred in paragraph 12 of the Secretary-General's Second and Final Report