

REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE 25th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, in his address opening the twenty-fifth anniversary commemorative session of the United Nations General Assembly, drew attention to the broad crisis of confidence in the United Nations that had begun to develop, with peoples and governments everywhere questioning the relevance and the sense of purpose of this experiment in world co-operation. He reminded the Assembly that, if there were considerable shortcomings in the performance of the United Nations, there had been notable achievements in the first 25 years of its existence, and he appealed for concerted action to make still greater progress in the next quarter-century. In the future, as in the past, the United Nations will succeed or fail in accordance with the extent of the determination of its member states to fulfil their commitment to co-operate with one another under the Charter. While lack of complete success, particularly in maintaining international peace and security, tends to disillusion those who may have expected too much too quickly from the United Nations, there are many encouraging signs that the habit of co-operation is growing in many areas of multinational activity under the aegis of the United Nations.

Despite initial serious differences of opinion on points of detail, the commemorative session adopted a general declaration on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Organization in which member states rededicated themselves to the aims of the Charter. After many months of arduous preparatory negotiations, this special session also approved an agreement on a comprehensive strategy for the Second Development Decade, described by the President of the General Assembly, Edvard Hambro of Norway, as one of the most important documents ever adopted by any international organization. Finally, the commemorative session approved a declaration on friendly relations and co-operation among member states that will make a useful contribution to the development of international law.

Areas of Progress

When the United Nations again turned to the ordinary business of its twenty-fifth session, progress in a number of areas was recorded, notably: agreement on the treaty prohibiting the placing of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction on the seabed; agreement by all groups on the measures necessary to strengthen international security; and a decision, resulting from a Canadian initiative, to set up a committee to examine and recommend improvements for the General Assembly's procedure and organization.

The twenty-fifth session also devoted considerable time and attention to Middle East questions. In plenary, the Assembly debated the general situation in the Middle East and adopted a resolution calling for the extension of the ceasefire for a further three months and urging the parties to the Arab-Israeli dispute to resume peace talks under the auspices of Ambassador Jarring, special representative of the Secretary-General for the Middle East.