

You can understand, therefore, why I should feel the regret which I know you share that the basic difficulties of the Middle East have not been resolved. They still show little sign of being resolved. I am particularly aware of the tragic fact that conditions have not improved to an extent which would enable a greater proportion of the resources of the area to be applied to peaceful pursuits, more especially economic development. I am thinking, for example, as you are, of the pressing problems of placing people in economically secure activities in newly-reclaimed land.

I do not, of course, expect suspicion and hostility of such long standing as exist in the Middle East to be wiped out at one stroke. The countries of the area owe it to themselves, if not to the rest of the world to which the Middle East has given so much in the past, to reach over a period of time a mutual understanding, tacit if need be, that solutions lie not in the recourse to force or in the use of threats. They lie rather in the deliberate avoidance of words or actions incompatible with UN Charter obligations and with peaceful intentions and stability; in the willingness, when necessary, to have recourse to the international machinery established to maintain peace.

Although the reasons for particular situations are well known, we would all agree, I think, that it is regrettable that many countries at critical stages in their economic development should continue to find it necessary for their national security to devote large amounts to what is, in fact, the maintenance of a military deterrent. We all have reason to be concerned that the continuing extensive purchase of arms and the references which are often made to nuclear-weapons development could create an arms race leading towards a highly dangerous situation involving nuclear arms. Our own efforts in the field of disarmament testify to our worry at the upset in the international balance which would result from the increase in the number of states possessing independent nuclear capabilities.

We have been happy, therefore, to note the commitment expressed by Israel that it would not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons in the Middle East and the support which states of the area have given to proposals for the creation of Middle East and African nuclear-free zones. In the present Middle East climate of continuing mutual suspicion, a regional agreement on the non-acquisition of nuclear weapons accompanied with guarantees for the security of such non-nuclear states strikes me as the one step to which all interested nations should give their encouragement. Whether it is achieved in a regional or wider context is irrelevant, as long as pledges are acknowledged which could initiate an improvement in the whole climate of the area.

We have been considering creative ability, acts of faith and the tiring labour required to transform a desert and advance human welfare. I can assure you that in United Nations initiatives for peace and, I hope, in the foreign policy of our own country, there are parallels in terms of sustained diplomatic effort to the work of economic development with which you are particularly concerned tonight. I am pleased that the Foreign Minister of Israel, whom I had the pleasure of seeing in Ottawa a few months ago, paid tribute, in a recent speech in the Knesset, to the way in which Canada had "helped to fortify stability and tranquillity in the Mid-East". It has been our aim, in spite of the great problems involved and the disappointingly slow way in which any progress towards international stability is achieved, to pursue any possibility of fortifying peace in that area.