

Organization. In addition, it is my concern to help individuals whose human rights may have been violated. In particular, I seek to facilitate the release of those who may have been imprisoned or sentenced for political reasons. The criteria for judging such efforts must be whether they advance the cause of human rights and not whether they serve the political interest of one side or another.

The primary responsibility in this important matter rests, of course, with Governments which have entered into firm commitments towards each other and towards their peoples to respect internationally recognized standards proclaimed by the United Nations. We must try to create the conditions which will encourage all Governments to ensure respect of human rights in accordance with those standards. At the same time, we should examine existing United Nations practices and consider ways and means to make them more effective in dealing with gross violations of human rights wherever they occur.

The question of human rights is closely linked with the humanitarian activities of the United Nations. It seems to be a general rule that in times of recession or other difficulties, the weakest developing countries suffer the most, and the weakest groups in those countries are the most vulnerable of all.

In such cases, multilateral action through the United Nations is essential to alleviate the plight of the victims—action parallel to and co-ordinated with the remarkable work of non-governmental agencies. Various institutions within the United Nations system, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, as well as the specialized agencies, have done much in this field.

During the past year, the United Nations has focused attention on two major problems. In December 1983, I launched an appeal for help to the many African countries which were facing the worst drought in the twentieth century. The Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa in July of this year was another manifestation of multilateral co-operation in dealing with urgent social and humanitarian problems.

It is essential that we learn from our experience to approach future humanitarian problems in a coherent manner which takes account of all their elements. We must develop better means of alleviating and preventing crises. We must improve our capacity to provide humanitarian assistance quickly. In order to establish an early warning system, I have requested the heads of the various agencies of the United Nations as well as those of my field offices to inform me, on an urgent basis, of any situation which in their view could give rise to a major humanitarian crisis. Such a system should enable the United Nations to react to cases of emergency more adequately and speedily. The problems are enormous, but I believe that the level of public and governmental consciousness of the need to provide assistance in great humanitarian tragedies is growing. It is a fundamental responsibility of the international community to come to the aid of its least fortunate and most afflicted members.

The growing problem of narcotic drugs has become a major international anxiety, not least because of its effect on the future of children and young people. It has become more and more evident that international and multilateral efforts provide the best hope for arresting and reducing the traffic in and use of drugs, which have such appalling effect on both individuals and the societies in which they live. The institutions of the United Nations system, in co-operation with

Governments and other groups concerned with the problem, are actively working to deal with it. Greater effort is needed, however, and, for my part, I have taken steps to improve the co-ordination within the United Nations system of this vital activity.

Finally I wish to mention the steady increase in various forms of politically motivated violence, including hijacking, kidnapping, car-bombing and assassination. Our society is in some sectors becoming an armed camp. Order, civility and even public life are under serious threat in many parts of the world. As usual, the toll of innocent victims is appalling. It is not enough to deplore or condemn or try to control such acts of violence. Attention has also to be focused on ways of dealing with the root causes of these phenomena.

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The machinery of international co-operation must be serviced by an efficient and solid secretariat. One of my priorities is to improve the efficient functioning of the Secretariat, so that I may be able to satisfy Member States that all necessary human and other resources—but not more than is needed—are available and are being effectively used. To this end, last year I asked some of my senior colleagues to advise me on measures that could be taken to improve the administration and functioning of the Secretariat. On the basis of their advice, I have now decided on a number of actions designed either to increase efficiency or reduce costs, or both. For example, I have directed that there shall be a temporary suspension of recruitment. I shall report on these matters to the General Assembly in greater detail shortly. I very much hope that the Assembly will be mindful, in the resolutions it adopts, of my objectives.

The success of any programme for administrative improvement requires the active co-operation not only of all the members of the Secretariat but also of the Member States themselves. To this end I intend to ascertain the views of the membership on a number of approaches which I believe could with advantage be explored.

The General Assembly will be called upon to consider this year a number of issues of personnel policy including, in particular, those concerning salaries and other conditions of service of the staff. Different points of view inevitably will arise, and indeed have already been expressed to me, on the adequacy of these conditions of service. I am sure that Member States will recognize that the achievement of the highest standards of competence and integrity called for by the Charter requires corresponding and appropriate conditions of service.

The current system of salaries, allowances and pensions extends far beyond the United Nations itself. It affects all the agencies which, with the United Nations, participate in what has come to be known as the "common system". The General Assembly has repeatedly stressed the need to preserve and promote that linkage, without which the recruitment and administration of staff for the many participating organizations would be a chaotic exercise. The common system is also one in which a number of organs—notably the International Civil Service Commission and the Joint Staff Pension Board—have a regulatory role to play. I am confident that the discussion in the Assembly on these issues will take these facts into account.

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In considering the purpose and necessity of multilateralism, we should not forget that national interest generally stands first in the priorities of Governments. There is also, however, a growing sense of the *international* interest, the common good of humanity, and the preservation and wise stewardship of the world's resources for the benefit of future