

No. 53/24 The Opening of the Eighth General Assembly

Statement by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Chairman of the Canadian Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, made on the occasion of the opening of the Eighth Session of the Assembly in New York, September 18, 1953.

It is customary for the retiring President to say a few words at the beginning of each new Session. They should be few, in the interest of the speedy and effective conduct of the business before us. In any event, in the Annual Report of the Secretary-General, we have a clear and comprehensive record by which we can judge how well we have succeeded or how badly we have failed in the seventh Assembly.

That Assembly, which, I think, will be known as the Korean Assembly, was a long one, lasting until August 28 of this year. It imposed heavy burdens on national delegations, and especially on the members of the Secretariat. The reason for this was the Korean Question, which overshadowed all others. It presented us with a major challenge. The Assembly worked hard and patiently to meet it. By its resolution of December 3 last, it laid the foundation for breaking the prisoner-of-war deadlock at Panmunjom. Then after the armistice was concluded on July 28, the Assembly, after a long and thorough discussion, by a formal decision made provision for the United Nations side of the Korean Peace Conference recommended in Paragraph 60 of the Armistice Agreement.

It now remains for the others concerned to take the steps necessary to bring about this conference, whose success can have such beneficial and farreaching results, but whose failure might have equally farreaching results of the wrong kind.

From the Korean experience we have, I hope, learned some lessons. One is that collective action against aggression can work, even when that action is incomplete, in organization, support and participation.

Korea, then has been a vindication of the principle of collective action, but even more, it has shown what could be done if all members of the United Nations were willing, collectively, to pay the price to make such action effective.

Another major problem in our discussions at the seventh session, and one which will continue in the future to challenge our resources of intelligence and understanding concerns colonial and racial issue. We have seen in acute form the practical problems which arise in our organization in seeking to reconcile the principle of the domestic jurisdiction of sovereign states, and