

ANNEX "A"

THE SECURITY COUNCIL IN THE 1990s:

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

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This paper, drafted for the Léger Seminar on "The Security Council in the 1990s", Ottawa, September 20, 1996, aims to highlight trends in the Security Council since 1990, constraints on UN decision-making, some lessons drawn from recent UN peace operations and several priorities for the future. It closes with some issues for discussion at the seminar which participants may wish to consider. The questions raised in this paper and its concluding issues for discussion are by no means exhaustive and it is hoped participants will regard them simply as points of departure.

Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, and with growing momentum until recently, the UN Security Council has tested the **potential of the UN Charter's** provisions on international peace and security at a time when the end of the cold war has released ethnic and religious divisions long suppressed by totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. The Permanent Five (P-5) members of the Council - those with vetoes - now generally wish to co-operate in resolving conflict. In contrast to the situation during the deadlocked Cold War era, there have been only four vetoes in the last six years relative to 193 during the first 45 years of the UN's history<sup>2</sup>. The new disposition towards cooperation among the P-5 constitutes the most important change in the Council in recent decades. As a consequence, in practice (and to some degree in principle), the last six years have witnessed constant improvisation and decision-making by trial and error. The Council's priorities and methods will continue to evolve, but some lessons have been learned.

Among these is a greater appreciation of the limits within which action is possible. The Council had several solid successes in the late 1980's, such as the eventual resolution of the murderous Iran-Iraq war and the accession of Namibia to independence through a year-long UN engagement culminating in monitored elections. It was **Operation Desert Storm**, conducted by a "coalition of the willing" under Security Council mandate in the sands of Kuwait and Iraq, however, which introduced a period of euphoria in the Council in early 1991. The Council's activity redoubled in intensity, scope and vision,

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<sup>2</sup> The four vetoes have been two by the USSR/Russian Federation (one in May 1993 over financing of UNFICYP in Cyprus and another in December 1994 over sanctions against Serbia) and two by the US (in May 1995 over Israeli expropriation of Land in East Jerusalem and another in April 1996 over Israeli military action against Lebanon).