

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT

Statement on Seven-Power Draft Resolution
by Mr. Sidney E. Smith, Secretary of State
for External Affairs, at the Third Emergency
Special Session of the General Assembly of
the United Nations, New York, August 19, 1958

I am sure that Members of this Assembly by now have had time to study the draft resolution which the Canadian delegation is pleased to sponsor with the delegations of Colombia, Denmark, Liberia, Norway, Panama and Paraguay.

After the lucid presentation of this joint draft resolution by the representative of Norway -- with whom it has been an honour and a pleasure for me to co-operate closely during the past week -- there is no need for me to analyse again the contents of the draft resolution. Instead, I wish to dwell for a moment on some of the considerations which we have had in mind during the discussions leading up to the introduction of a draft resolution in the form now before us.

Along with Mr. Engen, I concede immediately that this draft resolution is not perfect, it is not ideal. It will probably be found entirely satisfactory or perfect to no country or grouping of countries. That is perhaps inevitable, but I do suggest, that it is not necessarily a weakness when the objective of the draft resolution is a reconciliation of conflicting interests, for if it were otherwise there could be no common ground, no point of departure from which to seek conciliatory and compromise solutions which will safeguard the essential interests of all parties without requiring of any undue risk or sacrifice.

This draft resolution is designed, therefore, to serve as a point of departure and a basis of discussion, and we would hope that it would lead to further developments in two main areas where special support to it must be given if the draft resolution is to achieve its purpose.

I speak first, very frankly, of the Arab States themselves, without whose positive and indeed active co-operation there can, of course, be no durable settlement of the problems of the Middle East. It may be that some of the Arab countries have their difficulties with this draft resolution, some parts of which may seem to fall short of what they may believe they have a right to expect. But we earnestly hope that they will weigh the merits of the draft resolution as a whole and find in it not an impediment to evolution but a new basis for harmony, prosperity and growth in the Middle East.

But regional support by itself cannot resolve issues which, as recent events have shown, can have repercussions extending far beyond the Middle East. Complementary to the co-operation of the countries of the area, and not necessarily of secondary importance, is, therefore, the need for recognition by the major Powers, including the Soviet Union, the special recognition, of the obligations which rest upon the major Powers as a consequence of their involvement in different ways in the affairs of the Middle East. Of course every nation represented in this hall has an interest in seeing to it that the Middle East is not allowed to become a part of the world that endangers global security and peace. I now ask this question: would it not be reasonable to look to the four great Powers for at least their unanimous support of this draft resolution as a form of acknowledgement of the risks which can flow from a great Power confrontation in the Middle East or perhaps for some more tangible expression of their common interest in pursuing policies of restraint in that troubled area?

It was precisely because my Government considered that a durable Middle East settlement required the active endorsement of the major Powers that we welcomed some weeks ago the original proposal for a meeting of the great Powers at a high level to deal with Middle East matters, and we welcomed the further proposal that these high-level talks should take place within the Security Council where the responsibility under the Charter for matters affecting international peace and security properly belongs. Those early efforts had to be abandoned, but I for one believe that in the General Assembly today we have been given an equal or even better possibility of engaging great-Power support for a Middle East settlement through the joint endorsement on the part of the great Powers of whatever resolutions and action may flow from this emergency session. One might even be permitted to hope that on the basis of a recognition of joint great-Power responsibility in a limited area such as the Middle East, it might be possible to develop a wider approach to other problems requiring four-Power agreement for their effective settlement, problems such as the testing and control of nuclear weapons,

disarmament and such other topics fundamental to international security and peace concerning which preparatory discussions for talks at the summit have been proceeding now for many months.

I repeat, then, that in my opinion the active co-operation of all the Arab States and the identification of all the major Powers with the purposes underlying this draft resolution are essential underpinnings on which its successful fulfilment must be founded. That is not, however, to say that there does not rest upon all of us, and in particular those with direct interests in the Middle East, a solemn obligation to exercise self-denial and restraint while our search for answers to the immediate needs of the current crisis and for a peaceful and prosperous pattern for that area in the future is in progress. The first responsibility of nations, both inside and outside the area, is to see to it that no word or deed of theirs precipitates a dangerous situation which could jeopardize the whole of the efforts of this Assembly. Any nation which failed to heed this warning would bear a grave responsibility before the bar of world opinion.

Secretary-General's Role

Turning to parts B and C of this draft resolution to which Mr. Engen has referred, dealing respectively with the short- and long-term problems with which we are attempting to grapple, may I say first a word about the Secretary-General's role.

The fact that this Assembly is going about its tasks in a purposeful way can, I think, be attributed in large measure to the Secretary-General's timely intervention on 8 August, at the first meeting of the emergency session, when he outlined in such broad but comprehensive terms the course which this Assembly could most usefully steer. In identifying what he described on that day as "basic needs for action in the area", the Secretary-General focused attention on the constructive purposes of this meeting. He provided us with a cogent survey of the problems of the area which require urgent attention -- a survey which has, in fact, guided the discussions here in large measure, from the outset of this session, along productive channels -- and that is reflected in no small measure in the proposals embodied in the draft resolution before us. The nature of the Secretary-General's statement illustrated the ever-increasing burden of responsibilities which he has been called upon to assume in recent weeks, acting always within the broad powers which the Charter confers upon him. Because the United Nations has now been called upon to attempt an entirely new role in the maintenance of stability and peace in respect of a particular area, and because the

Secretary-General symbolizes the authority of the United Nations, he will be asked, under this draft resolution, to take on even more responsibilities. The draft resolution seeks to strike a balance between the support and guidance which he must have from this Assembly in approaching his task, and the need to give him scope for consultation and effective action on his own initiative as circumstances may require. None of us should underestimate the difficulties or delicacy of the tasks which we are asking him in this draft resolution to assume, but I am sure that I reflect a unanimous opinion when I express confidence in his unique qualifications to meet successfully this new challenge.

The immediate issues with which the Secretary-General is being asked to deal are those relating to Lebanon and Jordan where there is the matter of troop withdrawal to be faced, and which is not unrelated to the political future of those two countries. Perhaps we should reconcile ourselves now to the thought that no formula can be wholly and universally satisfactory to cover the question of troop withdrawals. We have the statements of the leaders of two great and friendly Powers of their desire to remove their forces as soon as the United Nations has taken action appropriate to the circumstances prevailing in those countries. For our part, we are prepared to accept those assertions at their face value as an earnest of their desire to withdraw quickly. The United States and the United Kingdom simultaneously with their landings recognized the risks and thankless responsibilities which would flow from prolonging their presence in the area, and they then gave thought, and expressed that thought, to their withdrawal. Every consideration, including self-interest, would dictate that their action be brought to an end at an early date. In the letters which each of these nations has delivered to the President of the Assembly, we have renewed evidence to support this judgement, and I urge that all Members of this Assembly accept those letters as a renewed manifestation of their desire and intention to bring about an early termination to a situation which they recognize, and all of us recognize, could have unfortunate consequences.

Policy and Principle

But the problems of Lebanon and Jordan are more complex than the presence or otherwise of foreign forces on their soil. The search for solutions to the longer-term problems of those countries, and of the Middle East generally, raises, I am bound to observe, very difficult issues of practical policy and questions of principle which could have disturbing and far-reaching implications for the United Nations. The questions of principle relate to the extent to which the United Nations is at liberty to intervene in matters which Member States could regard as of domestic

concern. I think that it will be generally agreed that the United Nations has neither the right nor the duty to interfere in a country to support one form of government or one political party, or to prevent another form of government or political party from taking its place. Similarly, the Charter would seem to confer no right or duty on this Organization to promote or prevent a political union of sovereign countries which may wish to merge their separate sovereignties in a larger union or federation.

This seems to be clear as far as it goes, and it would be well if we were to recognize the relevance of these principles to the mandate that we are asking the Secretary-General to accept. But does this doctrine mean that the United Nations can have no interest in or answer to questions so fundamental to the original complaints which gave rise to the holding of this emergency session of the Assembly? It may be good international law, but is it an adequate answer to the urgent problems of policy with which the members of the international community are now confronted? It is equally good international law that a duly constituted and legally recognized Government can request another Government to send troops into its territory to buttress its security, and that the State so invited is at liberty, under international law, to respond to this request. To describe the response of the United States to the appeal from the Lebanese Government for help, and the response of the United Kingdom to that of the Government of Jordan, as "aggression" is ridiculous and really makes no sense, and indeed could make nonsense of the most central and serious provisions of the Charter. Having said that, I hasten to make this observation: At the same time, the generalized assertion of such a right to seek and receive assistance from any Government willing to give it could greatly complicate the search for peaceful adjustments of situations that might contain a threat to peace. These are problems of policy for which our present canons of international law do not give adequate guidance.

Similarly, the way in which the succession to power in a State is effected may have a profound impact on the structure and sense of security of neighbouring States. A sudden and violent change of regime in one country may have repercussions which may lead neighbouring countries to feel that their external security is threatened. How can we work out a tolerable reconciliation between the principle, central to the whole conception of the United Nations, that each State has the right to determine for itself what its form of government shall be, and the equally important consideration that no country should have the privilege of jeopardizing the peace and security of its neighbours? These considerations must both be taken into account in attempting to formulate an appropriate United Nations treatment of the problems which are before the Assembly.

In attempting such a reconciliation, it will help, I think, for us to recognize that not all the concepts of international law, or all the assumptions on which our Charter is based, are realized with equal fullness and precision in all parts of the world.

Commonwealth Example

We in the British Commonwealth of Nations, for example, are independent sovereign countries, freely accepting the obligations which arise from our membership in the United Nations and in the international community. At the same time, we attach a high degree of importance to the special relationships, often very hard to define and delineate, which link us, one with another, in the Commonwealth connexion. We do not think of the other members of the Commonwealth as "foreign". There is a large body of opinion in each of our countries within the British Commonwealth which would, I believe, resent and resist any suggestions which might come from other parts of the world that we should reduce our mutual relationships within the Commonwealth to the bare minimum that international law expects of the relationships between members of the international community.

I cite the Commonwealth example because I venture to suggest that we would do well to recognize that the members of the Arab region in the Middle East may feel that they too are in a special relationship with one another. Their relationship with one another may come under the heading of external affairs, but it is probably misleading to regard them as foreign affairs in the classical meaning which diplomacy gives the term. The relations among the Arab nations in the Middle East have been developing and evolving very rapidly. Similarly, national sentiments and aspirations are rapidly taking political and constitutional shape in what not so long ago were the non-self-governing parts of the British Commonwealth and Empire. In a sense, the emergence of new national governments and groupings in the Arab area represents a challenge to the imagination and sympathy of older and longer-established members of the international community in somewhat the same way as the emergence of new Asian and African Commonwealth countries has represented a challenge to the sympathy, the understanding and the support of older members of our British Commonwealth.

It is for reasons like these that I should be doubtful of the wisdom of anyone attempting from the outside to prescribe and codify any very precise pattern for the relationships of the Arab countries inter se, or even for their individual or collective relationship to the countries that make up the rest of the world. The United Nations has, perhaps, a collective responsibility to show its sympathetic

concern for the political evolution of the Arab countries, but even the United Nations cannot dictate the pace of that development or attempt to influence the political form that it may ultimately assume. What is important, particularly in this transitional stage, is that we should recognize that the pattern of economic and political relationships has not reached a settled equilibrium in the Middle East any more than it has reached an equilibrium in the British Commonwealth or, for that matter, in Western Europe, where economic, social and political forces are creating new systems of international and, in some cases, supranational co-operation in forms whose ultimate shape none of us can foresee.

Peaceful Changes Must be Peaceful

While these processes, all natural enough, perhaps even inevitable, are working themselves out, our chief responsibility in the United Nations is to see that our thinking and that our institutions should be sufficiently flexible and realistic to accommodate themselves to the facts of change. Changes will have to come, but they must come peacefully. This much the world has a right to expect, and all our efforts, either within this Organization or in fields of policy beyond it, should be directed to this task. This is in the common interest of all of us, whether we are members of the Warsaw Pact, of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or whether we belong to that group sometimes referred to as the uncommitted nations in the cold war. The whole world has ultimately a single interest in preventing the strains and stresses arising from rapid and unequal rates of development in these areas from bringing us all into fatal collision.

I am on surer ground when I turn to the economic provisions of the resolutions before us. Just as the unequal pace of political development in the Middle East has produced stresses in the relations among the States of the area, so also has the unequal distribution of economic resources had its impact on the rate of economic and social development in various parts of the Middle East. The invitation -- that is what it is -- to the Arab States to create for themselves, with the technical assistance available through the United Nations specialized agencies and other United Nations organizations, development institutions serving the interests of the region as a whole, is an attempt to make possible the lessening of the economic disparities between one part of the area and another.

The need for a regional approach of this nature was foreshadowed in the Secretary-General's able statement on 8 August to which I have referred, and has already met with a quick and constructive response on the part of the United States Government. The proposals which President

Eisenhower outlined on 13 August from this platform could have far-reaching and beneficial consequences for the Middle East, and no one, I suggest, should underestimate the significance of the new policies which President Eisenhower thereby enunciated. The willingness of the United States to support materially and technically the kind of initiative envisaged by the Secretary-General to solve problems which have been a source of friction and an obstacle to progress in the Middle East for so long is to be highly commended, as is the recognition on the part of the United States that it is through the United Nations that the means to carry out these proposals should be found. It is unfortunate that bilateral economic programmes which ought to have benefitted this area should often in the past have been spurned for political reasons, or have been the occasion for an intensification of political rivalries within the area and political rivalries between the great Powers. The Canadian Government, for its part, has already endorsed in principle the concept of a Middle East regional economic development plan under United Nations auspices, and we would sincerely hope that the Arab States will themselves see the advantage of taking the initiative to implement the suggestions contained in paragraph 2 of section C of this resolution.

U.N. Peace Force

A further long-term project which will be carried a step further if the present resolution receives the general support that it deserves is that relating to the creation of a stand-by United Nations Peace Force. The Canadian Government's support, over many years, for the creation of such a force is a matter of record in this Assembly, reaffirmed as recently as last September when Prime Minister Diefenbaker addressed the opening meeting of the twelfth regular session.

It is indeed an essential element in Canadian policy to accord high priority to the honouring of commitments to preserve the peace through United Nations action, and to provide the Organization with instrumentalities to accomplish its purposes. Canada welcomes a new, or perhaps I should say a renewed effort in the direction of a more permanent and workmanlike arrangement to meet the requirements of the United Nations in this regard. Our willingness to respond to specific United Nations requests has led to a long record of United Nations service of which Canada is justly proud.

Operations of the United Nations Emergency Force in Gaza have required the greatest numerical contribution on the part of Canada, but we have borne, with equal willingness, our share of responsibility in other United Nations peace efforts: in Kashmir, in the Truce Supervision

Organization in Palestine, and now in the Observation Group in Lebanon. It is no more than a coincidence that three of these efforts in which Canada has found itself involved under the aegis of the United Nations are in the Middle East, a region in which we otherwise would have no more direct interest than that which flows from the normal cultural and commercial intercourse between nations. But as a middle Power we do, however, have a very direct interest in the preservation of international peace and the promotion of understanding among nations, and it is as a manifestation of that interest that Canada has men in the Middle East participating in UNEF, in UNTSO, and now in UNOGIL.

The Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, at this emergency session of the General Assembly, has endorsed the suggestion that a "stand-by United Nations peace force" should be created to make possible quick action in an emergency, and he has referred to the studies which the Secretary-General has been conducting. This important matter will require most careful study. I have been somewhat disturbed in the last day or two to hear from some of my fellow representatives that there is a set plan in that regard. I repeat what I have just said: It requires the most careful study. The experience of the past has shown that United Nations requirements can involve a wide variety of types of service, none of which may offer an exact precedent for a more permanent type of stand-by force. The further examination of alternative possibilities will be greatly assisted by the report which the Secretary-General will make to the thirteenth session of the General Assembly next month.

Although the immediate situation with which we are faced may well not require the kind of action for which a stand-by force may be designed, it will give, I pray, renewed impetus towards the creation of such an instrumentality, an objective which was clearly in the minds of the authors of the Charter in 1945, and which we would do well to explore further at a moment when the role of the United Nations as a peace-preserving body is once more uppermost in our minds. Despite the darkness of this crisis, yet there are lessons to be learned from it. May we profit from those lessons and let us not forget these lessons.

There is a third long-term objective that we hope to see result directly or indirectly from our present deliberations. This objective is not to be found in the draft resolution. I refer to Canada's hope that there could be laid a network of interlocking non-aggression agreements in the Middle East region, which could guarantee the independence and the integrity of each and all of the States of the area, and thus provide a solid basis for the

economic and other constructive proposals which are within the grasp of the States of that area if this draft resolution accomplishes the objectives which we and the other co-sponsors have in mind.

Objectives of Resolution

I have spoken about the results which we are confident would flow from individual parts of the draft resolution, but I would revert to the thought that I expressed earlier, that the draft resolution be assessed as a comprehensive approach which attempts to reconcile widely divergent points of view. It deserves careful study for it points the way to constructive action through and by the United Nations.

The draft resolution does not attempt to apportion responsibility for the past in relation to the problems of the Middle East. It does not invite the Assembly to commend or condemn the national policies that any of us has pursued. It asks us all to recognize the situation that exists de facto, and outlines a course of action which, if we all pursued it scrupulously, could lead us out of that situation. It requires good will, it requires restraint, and it will require the best efforts of the Secretary-General, on whose shoulders we have perforce to place so heavy a load.

It is our hope in commending this draft resolution to the Assembly that every one of us will find it possible to endorse it. This, I believe, is a moment in the history of the United Nations where a conventional majority is not enough. In the minds of some this may not be a perfectly balanced draft resolution, but time does not always work on the side of peace. It is important to make a beginning, and a beginning in the right direction. If we could all -- and I address this argument directly to the members of the Soviet delegation -- vote for this draft resolution, we would have made a start -- a transforming start -- in the slow process of bringing order and mutual respect into our several approaches to the questions relating to the Middle East. This emergency session of the General Assembly thus would make a great, a unique, contribution towards the foundation of peace in an area from which war could all too easily come.

I am not saying this by way of winding up my remarks, but I say it very solemnly and with deep feeling. Humanity today awaits our decisions. Will we fail humanity?