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Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs,
and President of the United Nations General Assembly,
Mr. L.B. Pearson, on the Adjournment of the Seventh Session,
December 22, 1952.

The seventh session of the General Assembly has just adjourned, to be resumed on February 24 next, or earlier at the call of the President. When I was elected to the Presidency on October 14, I was under no illusion that it would be anything but a difficult session, or that our tasks would be easy of accomplishment. I said then that the issues facing us would impose as severe tests on our world organization as any in its history. This has been borne out in our work of the past two months. The agenda has been crowded with problems of great importance and complexity, but the General Assembly in its deliberations, and in its decisions, has neither evaded the crucial issues of our troubled world, nor sought solutions which ignore the hard realities of the international situation. The task which confronted it, then, has been not an excuse for inaction, but a challenge to effort.

The main question before the Assembly has been that of Korea. At the beginning of this Session it was agreed unanimously that the Korean question should be given priority. That was done because it is the first responsibility of the United Nations to do what it can to bring the fighting there to an end on honourable terms. In the Korean discussions, the debate centered around the one remaining obstacle to the achievement of an armistice - the question of the repatriation of prisoners of war.

The Resolution on Korea, which 54 members of the General Assembly approved on December 3, represented an important and constructive move to solve this question. It reflected a full and free exchange of views between members of the United Nations, and was a consensus of these views arrived at after lengthy negotiation and discussion. If it had been accepted, it could have brought the fighting in Korea to an end without delay.

In my capacity as President of the Assembly, and under the terms of the Resolution, I communicated the Assembly's proposals to the Foreign Minister of the Central People's Government at Peking, and to the North Korean authorities. At the same time, as President of the Assembly, I made an appeal to the Chinese and North Korean authorities to accept these proposals as the basis of an armistice which could bring peace.

The Central People's Government and the North Korean authorities have now rejected the United Nations initiative in terms which make it clear that they are not prepared at

this time to join in the task of bringing the war in Korea to an end on terms considered acceptable to the United Nations and in conformity with international law.

In speaking to the General Assembly on October 14, the opening day of the present session, I said:

"Our task will not be easy, for the General Assembly of 1952 faces its own crisis. The effort by the United Nations to bring about an armistice in Korea on honourable terms - which would be the only ones acceptable - remains frustrated and unsuccessful. The United Nations, therefore, has not been able to move forward into the positive phases of peaceful settlement and reconstruction in that area which should be possible, on the basis of decisions already taken by us, once the aggression has been stopped and the fighting ended. Those who prevent this armistice - the first step in the process of healing and restoration - bear a heavy responsibility before history and humanity".

Despite the reply from the Central People's Government and the North Korean authorities, I am convinced that the efforts which we have made have not been in vain and that they represent a major achievement in the history of the seventh session. For one thing, we would have failed in our responsibility to this world organization and its principles had we not made the attempt. For another, it has been demonstrated that nearly all our members were prepared to agree on a proposal which, consistent with United Nations principles, provided the basis for an armistice and eventual peace in Korea.

To bring the fighting in Korea to an end and to move forward into the positive phases of reconstruction and peaceful settlement is still, therefore, the great challenge which faces the United Nations. I have no doubt that, through our Organization, we shall persist - and we shall succeed - in our joint effort to achieve this objective, which remains our only objective in Korea.

The other major problem which has occupied our attention arises from colonial and racial issues. The problem here has been to achieve a reconciliation of the principle of the domestic jurisdiction of sovereign states and the responsibility of some of them for the administration of dependent peoples in their progress toward self-government, with the legitimate interest of the United Nations in human rights and freedom for all peoples. Under several items on the Assembly's agenda, these issues have been fully and freely discussed, and on the whole with moderation and a high sense of responsibility. We have come to see that our differences rest more on questions of means than of ends, more on the pace of progress than on our destination, about which we are in general agreement.

I have no wish to attempt to assess in detail the work of the Assembly. For one thing, it is not finished. I wished only to touch on one or two examples to show why I think that this has been an important and not unproductive Assembly so far. If we have failed to find answers to the big questions, if we have seemed to be substituting resolutions for solutions, and if we have at times laboured long for results that did not measure up to our hopes, this is not primarily the fault of the United Nations. I believe that, in the world in which we live - not the one in which we should

like to live - this Assembly has made an honest attempt to come to grips in a constructive and responsible manner with some of the major problems of our day.

I should like also to take this opportunity of paying a very well deserved tribute to the Secretariat and to its distinguished leader, the Secretary-General. The continuity and effectiveness of the General Assembly's work must depend very largely on the integrity and efficiency of our international civil servants. The Secretariat have once again served us loyally and well, and I should like to express the Assembly's appreciation for their extremely hard work and devotion to what is often a thankless and difficult task; and to what is often a misunderstood ideal, that of international service.

The work of the seventh session is not completed, and we shall be carrying on in the New Year. During these recent weeks I have received, as President of the General Assembly, a great many letters from men and women everywhere which deal with matters before our Organization. They reflect the deep interest and anxious concern with which the whole world follows the deliberations of the United Nations, and the hopes and prayers for the achievement of the purposes to which this Organization is dedicated. They reflect too the conviction that in the twentieth century we cannot dispense with the United Nations, which remains - in spite of everything - our best hope for the establishment of peace and orderly progress.

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