

GOVERNMENT



OF CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

57/43

STATEMENT ON UNEF

Statement on the resolution on the continuance and financing of the United Nations Emergency Force, by Mr. Sidney E. Smith, Secretary of State for External Affairs for Canada, and Chairman of the Canadian Delegation in the Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on November 22, 1957.

Mr. President,

The representatives present at this meeting of the General Assembly need hardly be reminded that, slightly more than a year ago, the Assembly met in emergency session in the face of a dangerous situation which had arisen in the Middle East. For reasons with which we are all familiar, it was --and I emphasize this--it was the Assembly, in which all Member Governments are represented, which bore the brunt of that crisis, that situation which had the gravest implications for the peace of the area and, indeed, of the whole world. Our meeting at this time, however, is not to dwell upon the events of the past but to consider the consequences of one of the important steps which the Assembly took last year, namely, the establishment of the United Nations Emergency Force. That was a decision in which all of us participated.

Since the dark days of November 1956, a great deal has been said and written about the role of UNEF in the Middle East. Members of this Assembly may not then have been wholly in agreement on the principles which should govern the presence and functioning of that Force. But what we are now agreed on, I believe, is that UNEF has made a valuable contribution to the maintenance of quiet and order in the area of its deployment. This, in turn, has done much to allay the anxiety, the fear and the frustration which had produced international tension there. In the introduction to his last annual report to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General has made thoughtful and persuasive comment on the ways in which the Force has continued to serve the cause of peace in the Middle East, and he points out that it has played a pioneering role which has been accompanied by many difficulties.

In the admirable report (A/369), dated 9 October 1957, which the Secretary-General has made, he discusses in detail the development of UNEF. I could not possibly improve on what the report states about organizational and operational matters and about the role and functioning of the Force. I wish only to add my voice to the other expressions of warm appreciation which we have heard from time to time about the Secretary-General and his staff--those men and women who have worked so tirelessly and effectively for the success of the UNEF experiment. It is, of course, a source of satisfaction to Canada that the Commanding Officer of the Force has been Major General Burns--a Canadian.

At the same time, I pay equally warm tribute to those Governments which, in one way or another, have made a contribution to this work of practical peace-making. I have in mind the participating Governments which, with Canada, have provided contingents to UNEF; the Governments which, without charge, have furnished services, facilities and supplies; the Governments which have made voluntary contributions and special assistance available in order to meet the problems of financing the Force; and also those Governments which offered contingents in the early days of UNEF when the broad response did much to encourage those whose responsibility it was to organize the Force. All those Governments warrant congratulations for their support of the United Nations at that time of great trial--a time which perhaps provided a decisive test of the vitality of this Organization. And this rallying round of Member States, representing various shades of opinion in this Assembly, is inspiring evidence that the United Nations ideal can be given practical expression.

For, in a sense, the creation of the UNEF has been a practical application of the foremost among the purposes and principles enunciated in Article I of our Charter. In establishing UNEF, the United Nations took an effective and collective step towards the prevention and removal of a threat to peace. The collectivity of this action is symbolized in the composition of the Force itself and in the offers and contributions made by other Governments to assist in bringing UNEF into being.

In this context, it is appropriate to mention the helpful attitude which the Government of Egypt has adopted toward the presence and functioning of UNEF in territory under Egyptian control.

The Prime Minister of Canada has already expressed in this Assembly hall Canada's willingness to continue its contribution to UNEF as long as this is considered necessary by the United Nations. We are fully aware of those reasons why the duration or extent of UNEF's operation cannot be defined at this time. I can see no particular advantage in attempting that definition now. Nevertheless, we of Canada

deeply hope that the Members of this Assembly share our view that UNEF should continue to have the widest support of the United Nations as long as it appears to be making a useful contribution to peace in the area.

We have the impression that these views are widely shared in this Assembly. If this is so, it follows that the Assembly should give careful consideration to the consequences of continuing the Force in being. There is no doubt that the financial consequences are of concern to all of us here. The Secretary-General has described them in detail in Part III of his report. This shows that to maintain a force of 6,000 United Nations soldiers, performing necessary duties in the service of peace in the Middle East, involves a considerable expenditure. I have no desire to underestimate the actual cost, but I ask Members and I ask this very, very seriously to relate those financial costs to the political benefits which UNEF has helped to achieve, and to the possible dangers which UNEF has helped to avert. How do we measure the value of decreased tension between nations, the diminishing of fear and anxiety among peoples, and the strengthening of hope for further progress towards peace? It is surely these intangible factors which must be placed in the balance sheet--and which should be given due weight--when we look at the figures for the costs of UNEF.

To meet those costs, it seems to me inevitable that the Assembly should accept and firmly support the principle of common assessment, based on the regular scale of assessments for United Nations Members. The Secretary-General has placed the issue squarely before us in paragraph 106 of his report. He has stressed the grave risks inherent in an inadequate and insecure basis for financing UNEF. Clearly, to base the operations of the Force on a series of appeals for voluntary contributions would be quite inadequate and wholly unworthy of this Organization and the cause which it is serving. The validity of this conclusion has been demonstrated beyond doubt, and I say this without detracting from my previous expression of gratitude for the voluntary contributions and special assistance which some Members have so generously provided. I have no hesitation in supporting the assertion in the Secretary-General's report that:

"It is essential that this vital United Nations undertaking be assured of the same degree of certainty of financial support as afforded to other United Nations activities which have as their purpose the maintenance of security and peace." (A/3694, para. 106).

The Canadian view, which has been consistently expressed during the Assembly debates on this subject, is that the financing of UNEF and similar United Nations endeavours can be assured only if the principle of assessment, of collective sharing in the collective effort of peace, is followed.

It is with these views in mind that the Canadian Delegation has been consulting with a number of other delegations about the course of action which the Assembly should adopt at this time. We and others have reached certain conclusions which are embodied in the draft resolution (A/L.235/Add.1) now before us. It has been suggested that I should introduce this draft resolution formally to the Assembly. I consider it an honour and a privilege to do so, but I approach the task with a sense of humility, because I am conscious of the fact that I am acting on behalf of a large number of delegations whose names appear on the draft resolution and who represent most of the opinions held in this Assembly. Indeed, I earnestly hope that, in introducing this resolution, I am reflecting the views of the great majority of Members here. I say this because of my abiding conviction that UNEF is serving all of us in the Middle East and serving us well.

The draft resolution is a straightforward document. The preamble begins by recalling the earlier resolutions on UNEF. These resolutions, of course, remain operative and are in no way abrogated by the draft which we are considering today and which we should regard as complementary to the earlier resolutions.

The second paragraph of the preamble notes with appreciation the report which the Secretary-General has placed before us. It also recognizes the Assembly's wisdom in appointing an Advisory Committee on UNEF composed of representatives of certain Member Governments.

The third preambular paragraph acknowledges that UNEF has contributed and is contributing to the maintenance of quiet in the area.

In the operative paragraphs, following an expression of appreciation to those who have rendered assistance to the Force, three main decisions are involved. The first is the approval of the principles and proposals concerning the allocation of costs as between the United Nations and the Governments which have provided contingents for UNEF. These are set forth mainly in paragraphs 86, 88 and 91 of the Secretary-General's report. The Secretary-General would be authorized to enter into the agreements for the reimbursements of appropriate extra and extraordinary costs to the Members contributing troops. This provision is consistent with earlier resolutions concerning the allocation of costs and it is most important by reason of its implications for participating Governments, which have made a considerable effort to give the Assembly's decisions on UNEF effective application. Such voluntary participation in this and similar activities of the United Nations should be encouraged.

Secondly, the Secretary-General would be authorized by the Assembly to expend the additional amounts necessary to meet the costs during the period ending 31 December, 1957. These costs are set forth in Part III of the Secretary-General's report and will be given detailed examination by the Administrative and Budgetary Committee following the normal practice of the United Nations. The same procedure would be adopted regarding the cost estimates for the future operations of the Force beyond 31 December, 1957. For that period the Secretary-General would be authorized to expend, as necessary --and I emphasize "as necessary"--an amount not exceeding \$25 million. This figure could reasonably be expected to cover the costs of maintaining the Force on its present basis until the next session of the Assembly. In this regard, the words "as necessary" have special significance and I call the attention of the Assembly to them.

The third main decision contemplated in the draft resolution deals with the method of financing the Force. As I have emphasized in the earlier part of my statement, the basic principle should be that the expenses would be borne by the Member States in accordance with the annual scale of assessments. This principle is embodied in paragraph 4 of the draft resolution. The phrase "such other resources as may have become available" is not without importance, however, and should be read in conjunction with the note which the Secretary-General circulated on 20 November (A/3745). It will be seen that the liabilities--for the period ending 31 December, 1957 have been substantially reduced owing to the contributions of special assistance--and in this connection our warm appreciation is extended especially to the Government of the United States. We know that further assistance has been offered and, of course, other voluntary contributions in the future are not excluded.

Finally, the draft resolution requests the Administrative and Budgetary Committee, with the assistance of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, to examine, in the light of the present resolution, the cost estimates for maintaining the Force--that is, those contained in Part III of the Secretary-General's report. These budgetary bodies are requested to make such recommendations as they consider appropriate concerning the expenditures authorized by the resolution. This request would enable the General Assembly--and here I fall in line with your observation, Mr. President--to avoid discussion of details and to concentrate on the discussion of general principles.

The draft resolution embodies, we think, the various measures required to meet the needs of UNEF. In particular, it deals with the administrative decisions listed in paragraph 111 of the Secretary-General's report. But the draft resolution does more than that; it establishes a sound basis for the continuing operation of UNEF and, together with the various reports by the Secretary-General, lays the groundwork for the

analysis and study of the experience of UNEF which, the Secretary-General has suggested, should be preserved for the future.

The draft resolution is, moreover, a comprehensive document and one which must be viewed in its entirety. Any one paragraph would be virtually meaningless without the others. We believe that this integral character of the proposal should be retained.

I look forward to hearing the views of other delegations on this matter which has important implications for all of us as States Members of the United Nations and for the Organization itself. In introducing this draft resolution, I urge the Assembly to weigh carefully the measures which have been proposed. Our deliberations at this time have a bearing on whether we can demonstrate to the peoples of the world that the United Nations has the determination and strength to put into practice the high principles and purposes to which we all subscribed in acceding to the Charter.

I conclude by expressing my confidence that the Assembly's response now, as its response last year in circumstances of greater stress, anxiety and danger, will serve to give real meaning to those lofty ideals and will, in practical terms, enable UNEF to fulfill the responsibilities placed upon it by the General Assembly.

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