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*Address by Mr. William R. Tolbert, President of the
Republic of Liberia*

1. The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. William R. Tolbert Jr., President of the Republic of Liberia, and to invite him to address the thirty-first session of the General Assembly.

2. Mr. TOLBERT (President of the Republic of Liberia): In the name of the Government and people of Liberia, I am pleased to congratulate and salute you, Mr. President, and the people of the land from which you hail, and to extend felicitations on your unanimous election to the office of President. Your personal pre-eminence as Chairman of the various sessions of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea and your profound conversance with the endeavours of the United Nations; your skilful identification with the constructive and progressive forces for a new world order free from injustices and discrimination and free for equitable resource application, all confirm our belief that this session of the General Assembly, under your wise guidance, will fulfil its awesome responsibilities in these challenging times.

3. The Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, Mr. Gaston Thorn, who skilfully guided the work of the General Assembly of the United Nations during its thirtieth session, similarly deserves our high commendation, and we congratulate him on his successful handling of the affairs of that thirtieth session of the General Assembly.

4. We must also express to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kurt Waldheim, our thanks and appreciation for his lucid annual report on the work of the Organization [A/31/1/Add.1], which clearly presents the current state of international relations and appeals for positive international statesmanship in order to prevent a deterioration in relationships among nations. To the Secretary-General, for his sincere

and continuing efforts in the interest of advancing genuine international peace and security, we pay a special tribute.

5. In regard to the recent homegoing of a great Chinese statesman and patriot of renown, Chairman Mao Tsetung, who has left an indelible mark on history, I renew the sentiments of profound regret of the Government and people of Liberia for the irreparable loss sustained by the Government and people of the People's Republic of China.

6. On the occasions when I have been privileged and honoured to speak from this rostrum I have endeavoured to share with this august Assembly the concern of the Government and people of Liberia and have called for accelerated progress towards the realization of a new world order that would be responsive to the legitimate aspirations of all peoples in our one world. Since 1974 the world itself has made perceptible progress towards the evolution of that new order of international co-operation based on economic equity and social justice. On the other hand, the world has palpably failed to answer the cries for fundamental freedoms and human dignity. Nevertheless, as I review with you today the advancement in global reform and the regression in sacred human values, I remain convinced that political will and moral purpose and a fortified world conscience of dignity and development—these alone can bring the collective strength of peace and prosperity to this, our one world. These alone can forge strengthened co-alliance among institutions and peoples and nations. These alone can banish the imminent rift of cleavages and confrontation and prevent disastrous conflagration.

7. The Government of Liberia considers it extremely significant that newly independent States seek membership in the United Nations. We are convinced that through the United Nations in particular can be created the true international community so essential to global and interdependent aspirations. But, more than this, we are convinced that it is only through the United Nations that the legitimate interests of all nations alike can be safeguarded and upheld.

8. Nothing, therefore, gives me greater joy and satisfaction at this time than to salute the Republic of Seychelles, a sister African State which has been admitted as the one hundred and forty-fifth Member of this Organization following its admission to the Organization of African Unity and the non-aligned movement. This is another milestone in our journey towards the goal of universality of membership, a universality which we earnestly hope will soon embrace all independent States, especially those recently liberated from the yoke of colonialism. We extend to the brotherly people of Seychelles our heartiest congratulations and very best wishes.

9. While we welcome our sister African State to membership in this Organization, we note with deep regret that the People's Republic of Angola, a sister African State, has after a long and arduous struggle for freedom unfortunately experienced a denial which impedes the advancement of the principle of universality of membership.

10. In this connexion the time seems at hand when the United Nations must undertake a progressive adjustment of the veto power so as to place it in conformity with the democratization of international relations. As a first step we should here and now most seriously consider building into the current veto arrangement the requirement that the admission of independent States to membership in the United Nations be determined outside the framework of the veto by a two-thirds majority vote of the membership of the Security Council.

11. Meanwhile it remains our ardent hope that very soon Angola will rightfully take its appropriate seat as a full Member of this world body.

12. The people of Africa, seized with a consciousness of affinity, are being drawn closer and closer together. Once divided by apparently insurmountable barriers of language, distance, political intrigues and sectionalism, Africans are more aware of their indivisibility even against the forces of tension, of conflict and of social advantages and disadvantages. They recognize that their principle source of lasting peace and security lies in the mutual understanding of each other's problems and in collective efforts at eradicating their disabling effects.

13. Imbued with a sense of mutual respect and an equitable sharing of the advantages of modern technological advances, Africans, I can firmly say, will march together with all the nations of the world in a collective effort towards achieving the victory of peace over war, the triumph of love over hatred, and the supremacy of solidarity over discrimination, towards the dominance of prosperity over poverty, towards the imposition of human rights over human wrongs, towards the ascendancy of multiracial aspiration over selfish nationalism.

14. Indeed, if the 31 years of existence of this Organization have taught us anything, it is that the United Nations is a durable and highly viable Organization, that the vision of those who drew the founding plan was indeed far-sighted, and that the soundness of its guiding principles is unshakable.

15. Yet, as new perspectives and new experience follow change, and as change is a fundamental characteristic of our world, the Organization must be strengthened and made more responsive to the requirements of our times. Indeed, the efforts initiated at the sixth and seventh special sessions of the General Assembly and advanced in a number of other international forums, with particular reference to the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations with the aim of redressing structural imbalances and creating a more equitable system for the benefit of the entire world community, must be pursued with greater vigour, with urgency and collective commitment, in order to hasten the dawn of a new world order.

16. It must be the mission of the United Nations today to shape and give direction to this new order, for upon the speedy realization of this new order rest the very requirements for the maintenance of international peace and security, the continuing purposes of our great Organization.

17. I speak of an order which would seek to introduce into contemporary international relationships the concept of the family of man, a family whose members are interdependent, interested in the welfare and respectability of the community of nations and of one another, a family of nations wherein territorial integrity is inviolable, where international piracy is not permissible.

18. I speak of a new order that will actively battle to eradicate from human society the age-old enemies, ignorance, disease and poverty. I speak of a new order free from prejudices and complexes, from rancour and recoil. I speak of a world order where majority rule will freely embrace inviolable equal rights for all.

19. By both the circumstances of its birth over 129 years ago and the hostile external environment in which it existed during its early years—conditions which have contributed to the shaping of its unalterable convictions—Liberia has been impelled always to give uncompromising and constructive support to oppressed peoples struggling for their freedom and their inalienable rights. We solemnly reaffirm that support and renew here our commitment to buttress the legitimate efforts of all peoples striving to attain self-determination and independence.

20. As I stand here today, representing the people of Liberia, I assure you of our hearts' most fervent wish that abundant strength and courage be the possession of those who strive for a world of reason and understanding; that the good in all men be magnified; and that those issues which unite them, not those which divide them, will be distinctly perceived. It is our deepest wish that, as we move forward within our one world, we shall envisage the victory of man over his own evils and human frailties and that ultimately will prevail that peace within which to build and to grow, to live in harmony and in empathy with others, and within which to pursue our tomorrow in the fullness of confidence and crowning prosperity.

21. Our present hope is seriously marred by urgent problems affecting the conscience and continuity of the human quest for peace and social justice everywhere. Those problems, as contained in the situation in southern Africa, have reached crisis proportion.

22. Stubborn colonialism, racist minority rule, and the sinister policy of *apartheid* seem determined to stem the inevitable tide of total African emancipation. But that unjust and cruel effort must not be permitted to prevail over the dogged determination of the African peoples of the subregion to release themselves from the shackles of oppression and of justice denied.

23. The well-known 1969 Lusaka Manifesto on Southern Africa¹ and the 1975 Dar-es-Salaam Declaration on South-

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-fourth Session, Annexes*, agenda item 106, document A/7754.

ern Africa² have served both as guides and as instruments of reference as we face the problems of the subregion.

24. It was thus that as ill will characterized the attitude of the rebel Smith régime in the various negotiating efforts over the years, the struggle to end illegality and racist minority rule in Zimbabwe intensified. As delaying tactics and subterfuges were employed by the illegal and repressive régime in Namibia, the people of that Territory, led by the South West Africa People's Organization [SWAPO], continued to rise up in arms.

25. We must not forget that while more than 16 years separated Sharpeville from Soweto, spontaneous revolts have occurred with telling regularity in a number of African townships in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Capetown and elsewhere. Not even the repressive, barbaric and violent reaction of the murder squads of the *apartheid* régime has sufficed to quell the surging spirit of an oppressed but determined people.

26. In the end, it is their will to be free which will determine the outcome of the current struggle. The nationalistic will of the African people far outweighs the strength of any ideology or any resistance whatsoever. This determination must bring the nations and people of the earth to realize that Africans evolve their independent destinies.

27. It is clear that the armed struggle approach to liberation has not been Africa's first choice of method. In fact, such an approach has been forced on us, for there never has been, and there never will be, any compromising whatsoever on the sacred objective of total liberation from the remnants of colonialism, racist minority rule and *apartheid*.

28. As we in Liberia have welcomed, and engaged ourselves in, peaceful initiatives in respect of the problems of southern Africa in the past, the Government of Liberia can now only welcome the encouraging initiatives currently underway, notably the commendable efforts of the United States of America.

29. Now that the rebel Rhodesian leader has apparently bowed to the inevitable, and accepted the fundamentals of the British-American proposals—the convening of a constitutional conference and the creation of a transitional government leading to majority rule—Liberia fully associates itself with the view that the constitutional conference, under the auspices of the United Kingdom, should be immediately convened outside of Zimbabwe, and that clear modalities for effective transfer to majority rule be established and implemented without delay.

30. The time is thus at hand for maximum international goodwill and leadership, caution and patience. Failure to maintain the momentum towards accommodation already acquired; failure to maximize the current prospect for negotiated settlements based exclusively on the objectives of decolonization, majority rule and inviolable human equality; failure to defuse with timeliness the dangerous,

violent hostility which has everywhere been building up in southern Africa—this could irrevocably invite deepening and widening external involvement which would imperil the peace of the world.

31. Genuine and durable peace on the subcontinent demands steady progress on all of the fronts of oppression.

32. It is our prayerful wish that the outlines of a clearer settlement on both Zimbabwe and Namibia will soon emerge, and that far beyond the token desegregation of sports and other half-hearted, insufficient measures, the South African régime will heed the warning signals and take timely and positive action to dismantle its pernicious *apartheid* system.

33. In the region of the Middle East, where an abrasive and hostile stalemate prevails, I call on Israel to release to the Arab States the lands it obtained by conquest and has occupied since 1967.

34. I also urge the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people in all the processes leading to a just and lasting solution of the problems in that area of our one world.

35. I call also on the Arab States to recognize the legitimate rights of Israel to exist in the Middle East as a free and sovereign nation.

36. I call on the great Powers to desist from contributing to a military build-up in that area, which is already dangerously explosive and a threat to international peace and security.

37. In Lebanon, where a complicated internal rift continues, I appeal to all parties to exert their maximum efforts and understanding to ease tension and accelerate the dawn of a just and lasting peace in that region.

38. The question of Korea also lies heavy on the hearts of all peace-loving people, for we should like to see that peninsula devoid of violence and more vigorous for unification. In this regard, we remain deeply hopeful that, in the spirit of the North-South joint communiqué of 4 July 1972,³ dialogue will be intensified by the parties and encouraged by all nations.

39. On the critical matters of development and trade, I note with regret that proposals made by the Group of 77 at the fourth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], aimed at lessening the inequality in wealth between developed and developing countries, have been impeded by reservations on the part of some countries. Yet, I am pleased by the continuing positive posture of the United States and other major Powers, renewing the hope of dialogue and negotiation which I believe will, in time, constitute one of history's greatest turning-points towards harmonious international relationships.

40. The world situation as it exists today offers a challenge to the developed nations to effect the necessary

² Adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity at its ninth extraordinary session held from 7 to 10 April 1975.

³ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 27, annex I.*

redress of an imbalanced international socio-economic order. The extent to which the developed nations are willing to meet the challenge is left to be seen.

41. In a world where few are rich and many are poor, peace cannot flourish. Equally, in a world where the gap between countries continues to grow ever wider, a policy of genuine solidarity and collective self-reliance among developing countries, and between them and the developed countries, must be evolved as the best guarantee of true independence and freedom.

42. To this end, support for regional and multilateral institutions that would foster such efforts is one of the major policies of the Liberian Government. The establishment of the Mano River Union between Liberia and Sierra Leone and our active support of the Economic Community of West African States are well-known efforts in the interest of international co-operation for development.

43. Moreover, the linkage among the alliances in Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific in which Liberia cherishes its membership is another manifestation of our faith in forging co-alliances for international co-operation.

44. The arms race is accelerating. In the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Review of the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Disarmament, the pace of negotiation is rather discouraging.

45. Despite the General Assembly's appeal to all States, in particular to the nuclear Powers, to exert concerted efforts in all the appropriate international forums with a view to the formulation of prompt effective measures for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, I regret to note, and it is even very disheartening, that there remains a stalemate in the Organization's efforts. There are yet some countries which are not parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons [*resolution 2373 (XXII)*, *annex*] and the Treaty banning nuclear-weapons tests.⁴

46. We are appalled that the world's expenditure for armaments has reached a level of approximately \$US 300 billion per year. This vast sum spent on arms of all types is an important factor in the failure of the developing nations to make greater progress in the advancement of the Second United Nations Development Decade. It is, indeed, regrettable that some of the developing countries themselves are increasingly participating in this destructive, rather than constructive, spending process.

47. I believe that because the arms race, despite some progress made towards its containment, is a continuing threat to peace and human welfare, the General Assembly should focus on this problem in a special session. In this regard, the Government of Liberia fully endorses the recent resolution of the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Colombo in August, calling for such a meeting to convene not later than 1978 [*see A/31/197, annex I, para. 139*].

48. The Colombo Conference also appealed for disarmament in the context of General Assembly resolution

⁴ Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water, signed in Moscow on 5 August 1963.

2832 (XXVI), which declares the Indian Ocean a peace zone [*ibid.*, *annex IV, resolution 11*]. Let us all veritably resolve to move expeditiously towards the implementation of the resolution, making of the Indian Ocean a zone of peace from which must be excluded all power rivalries and competition as well as bases conceived in such contexts. Indeed, let us move creatively ahead in the progressive establishment of zones of peace throughout the world and thus usher in an era of serenity and security for our one world.

49. The vital importance of establishing a new international régime for the world's oceans can never be overemphasized. We associate ourselves, therefore, with the continuing efforts to endeavour to build upon the successes achieved so far in negotiations and, in the interim, to work assiduously to ensure fuller understanding in this strategic area of international co-operation.

50. In this thirty-first year of the existence of this noble world body, let us earnestly renew our commitment and dedication in the search for a permanent solution of the burning problems of our times, so that relations among nations can enter a higher plane of mutual accommodation and veritable peaceful coexistence. Let conciliation, and not conflict, co-operation, and not confrontation, be the order of the day.

51. We have faith sublime in the spirit of the single family of man. We have faith in the capabilities of selfless zeal to produce international brotherhood. We have faith that the pathway of morality and human solidarity will lessen tensions, bring new dimensions to international relations and fulfil the aspirations of all peoples within a wholesome functioning world society.

52. The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank His Excellency the President of the Republic of Liberia for the important statement we have just heard.

AGENDA ITEM 9

General debate (*continued*)

53. The PRESIDENT: Before I call on the first speaker, I should like once again to remind representatives of the decision adopted at the 4th plenary meeting of this session that representatives should refrain from going up to a speaker after he has finished his statement to extend their congratulations to him, as that disturbs the proceedings. I hope representatives will co-operate by applying that rule.

54. Mr. JAMIESON (Canada): Mr. President, in addressing this Assembly for the first time, I am conscious that you have given long and distinguished service to the United Nations. My delegation is confident that your knowledge and wisdom will contribute to the success of our deliberations and pledges its full co-operation to you in carrying out your duties.

55. May I also welcome the newest Member of the United Nations—Seychelles. Canada looks forward to establishing friendly relations with the people and Government of that new Commonwealth country.

56. I take this opportunity to express to the delegation of China the condolences of the Government and people of Canada on the death of Chairman Mao Tsetung. The world has lost a great man.

57. This is a time of difficult adjustment for the United Nations. Our membership, with some notable exceptions, is virtually complete, yet there are pressures to define more strictly the obligations of membership. Efforts to adapt the procedures and structure of the United Nations to accommodate new policy priorities introduce new tensions in some traditional bodies and activities. Agreement on standards and principles of human rights is not matched by an equal determination to implement those standards without discrimination. The Security Council meets more frequently than before, but there is no comparable increase in the number of agreed resolutions. Acts of piracy and terror, both within and between States, undermine the principles of international law and behaviour on which the United Nations Charter is based. The ideal of greater economic and social equality between nations is still far from translation into practice. And, finally, the choice between anarchy or order on the seas stands out before us in unmistakable clarity.

58. Canada supports the objective of universality of membership. The Charter, it is true, speaks of certain conditions for membership, but my Government takes the view that all States which apply for membership ought to be given the benefit of the doubt, if such exists. Any question about the degree of independence of such States should be resolved on the basis of the opinion and practice of the majority of Member States.

59. But Canada also believes that a Member, once admitted to membership, should remain a Member. We hold that it would be a dangerous precedent to recommend expulsion of a Member State on the grounds of violation of the principles of the Charter, unless that is the consensus of the whole membership. To purge this Organization of so-called unpopular Members could lead to the withdrawal of support by others and the paralysis of our activities. That is too high a price to pay.

60. We also hear threats from time to time to suspend the right of Israel to participate in the General Assembly. Canada would oppose such action. To deprive Members of their rights in the General Assembly on grounds not justified by the Charter makes a mockery of the Assembly. Our purpose is to debate the issues, not to stifle them.

61. One implication of universality of membership must be a willing acceptance of the obligations of membership, especially by those States which play a major role in the Organization. A responsible measure of participation in United Nations activities, especially those voluntary programmes which relieve suffering or help to maintain the peace, is a sign of such willingness. As a matter of principle, Canada will maintain its full and complete support for all United Nations organs of which it is a member. We would regret any trend towards the boycotting of United Nations institutions, or the unilateral reduction of assessed contributions to United Nations agencies, even though certain of their activities may be regarded by some States as harmful or irregular.

62. Nevertheless, we believe it is unwise to press resolutions to a vote on issues which deeply divide the membership. Canada regrets, for example, that the campaign against racial discrimination, on which there is wide consensus, should be associated with zionism, about which there is profound disagreement. If this link is maintained, my Government will not participate in the conference to be held in 1978 on racial discrimination.

63. The structure of our Organization and the priorities which it follows from time to time must reflect change in the world situation and in the membership. The shift over the years towards economic and social priorities is therefore desirable and understandable. We hope that some restructuring of the economic and social sector of the United Nations will take place as a result. We see merit in proposals to give a more central role to the Economic and Social Council and for arrangements in the Secretariat designed to support that role. It is not too soon to envisage the Economic and Social Council in permanent session, taking up groups of issues in some orderly fashion and giving close attention to the implementation of decisions taken at United Nations special conferences. The recommendations of the Habitat Conference,⁵ for example, of which Canada had the honour to act as host, require thorough and expert scrutiny.

64. We recognize as well that many Members believe the Charter reflects better the world of 1945 than the world of today. We agree that useful changes might be made. But here, as in other matters, the best may be the enemy of the good. Canada takes the view that the present balance of power between the General Assembly and the Security Council, which is the central issue of the Charter reform, is preferable to any alternative. The question of the Council's membership may be debatable, but its powers and structure still serve us well. So, too, does the principle of equal rights in the General Assembly. If the United Nations is to evolve gradually into a body capable of making decisions which affect the vital interests of all States, it must follow procedures which give confidence to its Members that those interests are secure.

65. The coming into force this year of the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights [*resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex*] is a major step forward for the United Nations. As a member of the Commission on Human Rights, Canada will now direct its efforts principally towards the protection of the rights defined in the Covenants and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. One obvious means is to make effective the investigative and appeal mechanisms that are now established. These mechanisms require that States be willing to accept impartial examination of their alleged failure to abide by their commitments. A court of human rights, as proposed by my German colleague, is a step we should consider. None of us has a perfect record. To fall short of the aspirations inscribed in the Covenants and the Declaration of Human Rights is not a matter for partisan polemics, but for sober assessment.

66. The obstacles ahead are formidable. Appeals against violations of human rights can be a threat to the legitimacy

⁵ See *Report of Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Vancouver, 31 May-11 June 1976* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.IV.7), part one.

of some Governments and an embarrassment to others. No State is immune to criticism in this regard, although some manage to deflect attention, while others become the centre of attraction. Canada will speak out to the best of its knowledge without regard for power or favour. We attach particular importance to the full implementation of the terms of the Declaration on torture which the General Assembly adopted in 1975.⁶

67. Our experience with peace-keeping has been different from our experience with human rights. The concepts and principles of United Nations peace-keeping have been the subject of strong disagreement, whereas the practice has been modestly successful.

68. Threats to peace and security vary from year to year, but we are rarely able to claim that none exists. This year we have been shocked by the continuing loss of life in Lebanon. The United Nations has not been able to contribute to peace-making efforts there but should remain ready to respond if the situation so requires.

69. A few weeks ago southern Africa was on the verge of disaster. It may still be so. But I am sure we are all encouraged by the developments of recent days. I pay a tribute to the patient diplomacy of the Secretary of State of the United States and welcome the apparent change of mind in Pretoria and Salisbury which his efforts may have achieved. My Government agrees that the early independence of both Namibia and Rhodesia on the basis of majority rule and racial harmony is essential to the peace of Africa. It believes as well that South Africa must meet the legitimate political, social and economic demands of the majority of South Africans, supported by the virtually unanimous opinion of this Assembly, if such peace is to endure.

70. In the Middle East the United Nations has no choice but to continue the peace-keeping duties authorized by the Security Council. We are encouraged at this time and were at this time last year, by the interim agreement reached between Egypt and Israel on the withdrawal of their forces from Sinai. We look forward to further negotiations which could lead eventually to a peace settlement on the basis of the principles agreed upon by the Security Council in its resolution 242 (1967), and which would take into account the legitimate concerns and interests of the Palestinian people. Whether negotiations are resumed bilaterally with the help of third-party mediation or whether they take place multilaterally in the presence of all the parties directly affected is less important than a joint determination by the States concerned to accept the necessity of establishing and maintaining peaceful relations between them. Pending the achievement of this objective, Canada will continue to contribute to United Nations peace-keeping operations and will oppose actions or initiatives which imperil the security and independence of States in the area, or make it more difficult for the United Nations to help in achieving a settlement.

71. In Cyprus the United Nations Peace-keeping Force still faces a difficult situation. The parties to the dispute are no

⁶ Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (see resolution 3452 (XXX)).

closer to agreement now than before. The situation on the ground remains tense and dangerous. It is generally agreed that the United Nations Force plays a vital role, but the costs of the Force are running \$40 million over the contributions collected. We believe strongly that all Member States, in particular the permanent members of the Security Council, should make appropriate contributions to duly authorized United Nations peace-keeping operations. The fact that only a dozen or so Governments have made payments to the United Nations Special Account for the first six months of this year is not a record of which we can be proud. I can only conclude that, unless the dispute moves towards settlement soon, my Government will have to review its position as a troop contributor in Cyprus.

72. We are concerned as well about continuing acts of terrorism throughout the world and about innocent people who have been threatened or killed.

73. The General Assembly established a Committee four years ago to study both terrorism itself and its underlying causes.⁷ The Committee came to no conclusions, and the Assembly has not even studied its report. We believe the Assembly should now concentrate on a single aspect of the problem in an effort to achieve concrete results.

74. I therefore support the proposal of my colleague from the Federal Republic of Germany [7th meeting] that priority should be given to action against the taking of hostages, and that international agreement should be reached to ensure the punishment of those who engage in such acts wherever they seek refuge. But we must not forget that conventions against aerial hijacking already exist. If all States were to ratify them we could be more confident that such hijackings would stop.

75. My predecessor spoke last year⁸ of the "totally unsatisfactory rate of progress in achieving disarmament measures" and said that the General Assembly must continue "as a spur to action in the field of disarmament". A year later the record is little better. In the words of our Secretary-General, "the problem of armaments continues to present the most serious threat to a peaceful and orderly future for the world community" [see A/31/1/Add.1, sect. V]. We should be ready to explore new avenues, and in this spirit my Government is prepared to consider sympathetically a proposal to convene a special session of the General Assembly on disarmament in 1978.

76. We must not delude ourselves, however, that the principal obstacles to progress on disarmament will be removed by discussion in this Assembly. These obstacles are the differences of view among States as to the best ways of ensuring their security. Our examination of ways of improving the role of the United Nations in the field of arms control and disarmament will have achieved little unless Member countries redouble their efforts to overcome those differences.

77. At this mid-point in the Disarmament Decade the responsibility to address ourselves to the real obstacles to

⁷ *Ad Hoc* Committee on International Terrorism, established under resolution 3034 (XXVII).

⁸ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Plenary Meetings*, 2356th meeting.

progress is shared by all Members of this Organization. But this responsibility falls most heavily on the nuclear-weapon States and other States of military significance. Progress will be meagre, unless we re-examine traditional assumptions, take adequate account of the security concerns of others, and seize all opportunities for concrete action.

78. All of us acknowledge that the money spent on weapons might be put to better use. Few of us reduce our defence budgets. To do so requires better understanding and mutual confidence. Such understanding and mutual confidence is difficult to achieve in the best of cases and not least in a world divided between wealth and poverty. That is why a common effort to accelerate the process of development and to reduce disparities is in the interest of all States.

79. The fourth session of UNCTAD has now taken place. The Conference on International Economic Co-operation, of which my predecessor, Mr. MacEachen, has the honour to be Co-Chairman, along with Mr. Pérez Guerrero of Venezuela, has been meeting since the conclusion of last year's General Assembly. It has not been an easy year. The results of the fourth session of UNCTAD were achieved with difficulty and the Paris Conference is not assured of success.

80. Yet, our difficulties should not obscure the fact that we have made significant progress towards agreement on the nature of our agenda and priorities, despite the apparent lack of concrete achievement. If our preparation is thorough, and our approach to it sincere, achievement will be more likely to follow, provided that the requisite political will exists on all sides. It is now my earnest hope that the present phase of the Paris Conference will bear fruit.

81. The work of the Paris Conference is proceeding in parallel with work in the larger international bodies associated with the United Nations system. Its participants are aware that they must retain a global perspective on the problems before them if non-participants in the Conference are to have confidence in its results, and if these are to influence the actions of Governments in the longer term.

82. The Conference is part of a continuing process of negotiation aimed at narrowing the gap between rich and poor. The process is complex and it is permanent. Old problems will not disappear quickly and new problems will emerge. In the pursuit of a more equitable international economic system, Canada is prepared to commit its efforts and its resources.

83. The fifth session of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea ended here in New York a little while ago without agreement except to meet again for a further session in the spring of next year. Significant progress has been made on many issues, but the Conference remains deeply divided on other issues to a point where a strong sense of impatience and even despair has set in about the seemingly endless nature of these negotiations.

84. Canada is strongly committed to the objective of the Conference—a new legal order for the oceans based on equity and sound management principles. As a major

coastal State Canada is acutely conscious of the inadequacy of the old order, based largely on the concept of freedom of the seas, which developed 300 years ago but which has become, with the force of modern technology, licence to foul the shores and ravage the fisheries of the oceans. As a Canadian from an Atlantic province, Newfoundland, which is heavily dependent upon the resources of the sea, I wish to leave this Assembly in no doubt about the strength of Canadian concerns on this matter.

85. Gravely depleted fisheries resources off our coasts led to a decision by Canada to extend our fisheries jurisdiction out to 200 miles as of 1 January 1977. This action is being taken within the framework of a system of sound conservation and rational management which we have negotiated on a bilateral and regional level with major fishing States operating off the Canadian coast. This action is also consistent with a growing consensus among nations reflected in the provisions of the single negotiating text that emerged from the Conference on the Law of the Sea last year and which has been confirmed in this year's revised text.⁹ Other States, including our immediate neighbours, have taken or announced similar action.

86. There are positive features and areas of progress in the work of the Conference which, I must add, Mr. President, are in significant measure due to your own skilful and tireless efforts as President of the Conference. Although unduly protracted, because of differences on a narrowing list of unresolved, hard-core issues, the Conference process has seen the emergence of a growing international consensus on a variety of important matters, in addition to the fisheries provisions that I have mentioned. The concept of a 200-mile exclusive economic zone with important coastal-State powers has achieved broad acceptance. There is general recognition of the need for special controls against marine pollution in ice-covered areas such as the Canadian Arctic. The rights of States in respect of the mineral resources of their continental shelves extending out to the continental margin are widely accepted in the Conference, although differences remain on the definition of the margin and on proposals for revenue-sharing in areas beyond 200 miles.

87. A major remaining obstacle to further progress has been the deadlock on the question of mining the rich resources of the deep sea-bed beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. On this and other unfinished business we must find internationally agreed solutions to avert a serious risk of conflict and for the benefit of all mankind. The process may be long and many are weary, but we must not flag in the effort to achieve agreement on an over-all régime for the oceans at the moment when, finally, success may be within our grasp.

88. I have spoken about our hopes and disappointments as Members of the United Nations. I conclude with the pledge that Canada will continue to be a loyal and, I trust, constructive Member. The United Nations suits Canada. We are a country of many peoples and cultures. We understand the meaning of compromise and consensus. We prize the opportunity to cultivate relations with near and distant

⁹ See *Official Records of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea*, vol. V (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.V.8), document A/CONF.62/WP.8/Rev.1.

friends. We remain committed to the purposes and principles of the Charter.

89. Mr. DE GUIRINGAUD (France) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, first of all I should like to express to you my warmest congratulations upon your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. The great talent of the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, of the President of the Conference on the Law of the Sea and of the representative in New York of the presidency of the non-aligned countries is known to all. I have no doubt that at this session it will increasingly manifest itself. The co-operation of the French delegation will be yours in helping you to bring to a successful conclusion your difficult task in the next few weeks.

90. I should also like to pay a tribute to the outgoing President, Mr. Gaston Thorn, who at the thirtieth session of the General Assembly displayed qualities of intelligence and character which made him the candidate of the group to which France belongs. An illustrious European and hence familiar with international problems, he found here a scene that was equal to the exceptional talents and gifts which brought him to the head of the Government of a country united to France both by the ties of history and geography and by those of the heart, will and reason.

91. Lastly, I am particularly pleased to find here again my friend Mr. Kurt Waldheim, who was so frequently for me a welcoming and understanding interlocutor and to tell him to what extent France appreciates the talent, the authority and the tact with which he accomplishes his lofty and difficult mission. Our confidence in him has never been wanting, and he still has our full support.

92. It is not without some emotion that, after having been twice accredited to the United Nations and, just recently, the Permanent Representative of France for more than four years, I address the Assembly today in this familiar setting in my capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs. I recognize the honour but also the weight of the duty which falls to me in this circumstance when once again, this time vested with broader responsibilities, I must make France's voice heard. My task is lightened by the pleasure I feel at seeing so many familiar faces and at drawing on such recent memories.

93. It will not surprise members of the Assembly that as a former Permanent Representative I am tempted to review the world situation in the light of our Charter. This document, written 30 years ago, is still the basic instrument of international co-operation. Do not its preamble and the purposes and principles it lays down for our Organization in memorable words contain a statement of the aspirations that should determine the action of peoples and States? A comparison between what should be and what actually is should serve to stimulate reflection and spur efforts so that, in this necessarily interdependent world where we live, war, poverty, intolerance and discrimination will no longer have to be put up with as inevitable ills.

94. To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war: that is the first goal set by the Charter. Although there is now no military conflict between States in the conventional sense of the word, how can we fail to see that overt

or potential hotbeds of crisis persist or have developed quite recently?

95. The crisis in Lebanon, a country to which France is deeply attached, is a tragic illustration of this fact. That country, once a model of coexistence among different communities, has been subject to uncontrolled outbreaks of violence for more than a year now. An implacable mechanism has consistently kindled new flames from the smoking ashes of each previous outbreak. What is at stake is Lebanon's very existence and the survival of its people in all their richness and diversity. It rests with the Lebanese people themselves to find through dialogue a political solution which, alone, can put an end to these fratricidal struggles.

96. On behalf of the French Government, I should like to express again to Mr. Elias Sarkis, the new President of the Lebanese Republic, our heartfelt wishes for the success of the difficult task he is undertaking and our hope that once peace is restored the Lebanese people will be able to devote their efforts to the necessary work of reconstruction.

97. I should like to state here that the crisis in Lebanon will be resolved only by a settlement based on the unity, integrity and sovereignty of the country. The French Government, for its part, remains available and, in particular, willing to facilitate any meeting or any search for reconciliation, which obviously presupposes a definitive cessation of the fighting. With a view to this, France is maintaining close contact with all the parties to the conflict.

98. Deeply moved by the suffering of the entire Lebanese people, we have endeavoured to provide humanitarian aid. Assistance has been granted to Lebanese nationals temporarily living in France and large shipments of medical supplies have been sent to Lebanon itself. Moreover, we are ready to lend our help, in conjunction with our partners in the European Community, to the reconstruction of Lebanon.

99. But the solution of the Lebanese tragedy cannot be separated from the solution of the Palestinian problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole. These three questions are in fact inextricably linked. It is for that reason that in the latter two cases we reaffirm both the necessity to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the basic nature of the three principles upon which any lasting settlement must necessarily rely: withdrawal from the territories occupied by Israel in June 1967, recognition of the Palestinians' right to a homeland, and the right of all States in the area, including Israel, to live in peace within secure, recognized and guaranteed boundaries.

100. The basis of any just and lasting settlement can be found in the application of those principles, especially as regards the Palestinians. That people, raised in hardship and made strong by suffering, has now taken its place as a necessary partner in any negotiation. It has become quite obvious that no solution to the conflict is possible unless the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to express its national identity becomes a reality. But how can that right be exercised without a territorial base which, at the proper time, could be given the structures of statehood?

101. Close to the Middle East is another area of tension, Cyprus. The United Nations feels especially responsible because it decided on the framework and guidelines for a settlement there. We are obliged, unfortunately, to recognize that the resolution adopted by our Assembly two years ago [*resolution 3212 (XXIX)*] has so far remained a dead letter.

102. Indeed, a settlement can result only from an agreement between the communities of the Republic of Cyprus. The United Nations has never ignored this. France and her European Community partners have, for their part, tried to persuade the parties involved to set aside passion and resentments, even when justified, in order to begin genuine negotiations and reach a settlement in keeping with law and justice. Such a settlement must preserve the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus and must be acceptable to all Cypriots.

103. The Secretary-General, who was entrusted by the Security Council with a mission whose importance deserves special emphasis, has tried in every way he has felt possible to carry out this mission successfully. He is striving and will continue to strive with all his well-known dedication to bring about a real resumption of and progress in inter-communal negotiations and to help them to move forward. We consider his contribution indispensable in attaining the goal we all seek: the restoration of peace in Cyprus and a return to its former prosperity.

104. I have cited only the examples of Lebanon, the Middle East and Cyprus here, but this by no means implies that the solemn pact that commits us "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another" is being respected everywhere else.

105. I note, however, that in South-East Asia, where the guns have at last fallen silent, the possibility does exist for the principles of our Charter now to find fruitful application. And what more fervent hope could we have for South-East Asia, so long divided and battered, than that peace should take hold, independence assert itself and co-operation increase in a spirit of tolerance? The recent improvement of bilateral relations among the various States of the region gives ground for hope that the time will come for a free and harmonious concertation; it gives hope that a regional grouping can be formed in mutual respect, a grouping that will make it possible to ensure the neutrality of South-East Asia as a whole and to pool efforts to meet the challenge of development. Who can fail to see how valuable an example the success of such an undertaking would be?

106. Nobody, of course, should put himself in the place of the nine countries of South-East Asia to assess the timeliness of one move or another or suggest the most appropriate ways in which they might co-operate. But it is our task to increase the chances of success and eventually to uphold the results of any initiative which would spare over 300 million people the dangers of new conflicts and the effects of confrontations which are not their own.

107. France, which has so many ties with that part of the world and whose sole ambition is to best serve the interests of the countries there, is for its part determined, along with

all those who share its concern, to make every effort to further this end.

108. Peace, the goal which is central to our action, is the product of an equilibrium which is built on the independence of States and nations, to be sure, but it also needs broader foundations. Back in 1945 did we not, after all, proclaim our "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small"?

109. Much has been said and done, right here and elsewhere, towards the realization of this noble goal. But we are forced to note that there are distressing situations in the world today which may at times actually jeopardize peace. Those situations arise from the failure to recognize the fundamental rights of the human person.

110. I am thinking most particularly of southern Africa, where tension and confrontation are becoming more acute. This development justifies the part we are taking and the support we are giving to the efforts to prevent a fatal escalation. It is all too evident that racial discrimination is the underlying cause of the crisis, though situations may differ here and there. France—and I want to say this with the greatest possible emphasis—rejects and condemns the policy of *apartheid*. The recent tragic incidents should have made South Africa's leaders realize at long last that such persistent contempt for the dignity of the human person in itself constitutes a source of perpetual conflict among men, and this could lock their country in a deadly cycle of unrest and repression.

111. The fact that France, like other countries, but to a lesser extent than some, maintains commercial relations with South Africa obviously should not be interpreted as contradicting its position on *apartheid*. The peaceful nature of a recent contract in the electro-nuclear sector has been amply demonstrated, as is witnessed, moreover, by the international guarantees that have been granted by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

112. The French Government's condemnation of racial discrimination and other aspects of the policy followed by Pretoria led it to adopt an increasingly restrictive policy with regard to the delivery of arms and ultimately to prohibit any new contracts or further sales. I informed the Security Council of this on 19 June in my capacity as Permanent Representative.¹⁰ I am saying it again here as a member of the French Government.

113. Elsewhere in southern Africa, the situation is of still more immediate concern. It is a matter of urgency that Namibia should in accordance with United Nations resolutions accede to sovereignty and independence under the supervision of our Organization after a constitutional process in which the political groups, the principal one being SWAPO, should participate. In several instances, we, together with our European partners, have approached Pretoria to that effect.

114. It is no less urgent a matter for the majority to accede to power in Rhodesia. Accordingly we welcomed

¹⁰ See *Official Records of the Security Council, Thirty-first Year, 1930th meeting*.

the announcement in which the illegal régime in Salisbury has at long last accepted that principle following the recent mission to southern Africa by the Secretary of State of the United States. In this matter, as in the question of Namibia, he has had our encouragement. Without concealing from ourselves the difficulties that still have to be overcome, we want to note the decisive step that has been taken and the change in thinking that it shows. In so far as the two communities and the African leaders directly concerned are prepared with the assistance of the administering Power to draw conclusions from this, it seems to us that prospects for a peaceful settlement may be foreseen, in accordance with the wish that France has always expressed.

115. The right of peoples to self-determination is written into our Charter. It has been the guiding principle throughout our policy on decolonization, and it is still our foremost criterion in defining the future of peoples and the framework for their existence.

116. With regard to the Comoros, France has scrupulously applied this principle, and we intend to remain faithful to it. Although we have raised no obstacle to the admission of the State of the Comoros to the United Nations, our attitude has frequently not been understood. I do not wish to harp on misunderstandings that I should like to see overcome. What is past is past; we are looking only to the future. I can tell you that the proposal on the status of Mayotte, to be submitted to the French Parliament, will indeed leave open all possibilities for the future, with due respect for the wishes of the peoples.

117. In the French Territory of the Afars and Issas, France is engaged in a process that will lead in a democratic manner to independence, if such is the wish of the population. Our intentions are, I believe, now understood, especially by those who are concerned most particularly with the peaceful settlement of this question, and understood by all those who have wanted to listen to us. We hope that all the States which call for this evolution will contribute to it as the process develops.

118. At this point I should like to emphasize that the issue of development is one of major importance for the African continent. Absolute priority has to be given to enabling African States rapidly to improve the lot of their peoples. This is one of the governing principles of France's African policy. Therefore, the President of the Republic recently proposed the creation of a fund for African advancement, an instrument of solidarity for the financing of development projects that are of special interest, particularly for the least favoured countries.

119. The need to give priority to development problems quite naturally leads us to hope that Africa will remain free from ideological conflicts and will not become a pawn of Powers outside the continent. As Mr. Giscard d'Estaing recently said:

"Africa must be left to the Africans, and the only competition that serves its interest is competition, the sole objective of which is the economic, social and cultural development of Africa."

120. Latin America too aspires to define its identity still more clearly. Its vast reservoir of human and intellectual potential, its rich cultural past and its very considerable resources assure for this continent a promising future. The affinity we have with its peoples makes us particularly sensitive to the respect for human dignity and the tolerance enjoined on us by our Charter, of which, as we know, Latin American nations have so frequently set an example.

121. Respect for the rights of the human person is not an obligation incumbent on States alone. Our laws and customs impose it on individuals as well. Here I should like to add France's voice to the universal cry of condemnation and anguish that is aroused by acts of terrorism. The point is not to determine whether certain forms of violence generate others, but to condemn such acts in their principle and to repress them because they involve innocent people, without distinction as to age or sex, making them instruments of intolerable blackmail.

122. The measures that should be taken to end this outrage are part of the yet unfinished labour of defining, and especially of ensuring, proper respect for human rights.

123. We fully approve of the initiative taken by the Federal Republic of Germany to combat the taking of hostages, and we will support it to the full.

124. But it is not enough to remove the most imminent threats of conflict and the most brutal manifestations of violence or better to guarantee the exercise of justice. The authors of the Charter knew full well that the freedom of mankind is but an empty phrase if the material prerequisites for existence are not satisfied. Hence the ultimate grand design which they assigned to our Organization: namely, to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

125. Of course, the results achieved cannot yet be considered satisfactory: the intolerable gap between the multitude of poor countries and the small minority of developed countries remains an object of scandal. It explains one of the predominant factors of tension in our world. But the United Nations effort to attain the objective of economic progress and justice deserves recognition. Over the years, right in this very place, I have witnessed the growing importance accorded development and co-operation. The seeds of these concepts were in the text of the Charter. Thirty years later, they have become an imperative.

126. France, for its part, believed in this effort—an effort made within our Organization, by our Organization. At the early sessions of UNCTAD, France presented specific ideas on the percentage of public aid for development, generalized preferences and the organization of raw-materials markets, which have made considerable headway. France closely associated itself with the elaboration of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade [resolution 2626 (XXV)] and confirmed its interest in this collective effort. When it became evident that new relations had to be established between the producers and consumers of energy, the French Government turned first to the United Nations to deal with this problem. Lastly, France has participated

unconditionally and without ambiguity in the immense undertaking of joint reflection required to set up a new international economic order. For, indeed, this is precisely what has to be done: to replace the disorder in world economic relations, and the relations of force permeating them, by the quest for rationality and justice; and to ensure lastingly, at the world level, as was stated last year by the President of the Republic, a better balance of trade, economic activity, currencies and revenues.

127. We are still wide of the mark, but progress has been made. Indispensable transfers of resources from the developed countries to the developing world are on the rise. That will be the case this year for the volume and percentage of French public aid. But what can and should evolve are the very structures of international trade. In this respect, I think that we must not underestimate the positive results of the fourth session of UNCTAD. After years of procrastination, the international community has finally committed itself to work for the organization of markets. France, whose delegation to that Conference took the initiative of making certain proposals concerning the centralized financing of buffer stocks of raw materials and which participated very closely in the drafting of the fundamental resolutions, is firmly resolved to participate actively and in good faith in the implementation of the principles approved in Nairobi.

128. The negotiations to begin shortly in Geneva on this vital question and the discussions to be continued on other important problems will require the understanding and patience of us all. Reason and realism preclude recourse to slogans and rejection of the facts. This law of life is even more binding in debates on the full range of economic problems, from energy to development, as is the case in the only forum with such a complete agenda—the Conference on International Economic Co-operation, which is being held in Paris at present.

129. It is only natural that the tensions of international life should be reflected in the work of that Conference since the justifiable impatience of the third world is so keen and since it is so difficult to define truly valid solutions in these diverse areas, even when agreement can be reached on the principles to be respected and the goals to be attained.

130. But the instrument is there if we want to, and if we can, go further. It is a unique instrument, with advantages recognized by all the participants, an instrument that can easily be used to complement the large meetings of the United Nations.

131. The world conferences held in recent years have broadened our field of action. I will mention, in particular, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm last year, the Second General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in Lima last year, and, more recently, the International Labour Organisation's Tripartite Conference on Employment, Income Distribution, Social Progress and the International Division of Labour. As the goals defined by Governments in their successive assemblies acquire world-wide importance, the variety of means and solutions must also grow. No prejudices should be allowed to limit the choice of methods needed to attain the desired goals.

132. The specific role of the United Nations is not to tackle each and every problem. It is still less to serve as an arena for conflicts in which the stakes would be the ephemeral, and useless, victory of one ideology over another. As the Charter says so well, the Organization must be "a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations" for purposes they hold in common. What we expect from it, through reflection, discussion and practical action, is that it arrive at and constantly perfect an over-all strategy to build this more effective, more equitable economic order.

133. There is no doubt that laying the foundations of this new order will be a lengthy task, because it involves nothing less than getting the world started in a new phase of organization and setting up a global system that reconciles the liberal principles of the old order with new measures governing structure and organization.

134. The basics are already present, namely, each nation's acceptance of this common endeavour of justice. As for concrete measures, we must still avoid getting bogged down in facile ultimatums and ready-made solutions. We have yet to listen to our partner, and confirm our faith in negotiation and co-operation, as the Economic and Social Council asked us to do at its session this summer in Abidjan. In order for us to be faithful to the spirit of the Charter, we must still combine perseverance, courage and realism.

135. To "live together in peace with one another as good neighbours" is the last great aspiration that the Charter proposes to our peoples.

136. The organization of regional relations, particularly in Latin America and Africa, corresponds to this desire. I shall refrain from making an assessment which our friends from these regions might find out of place. I shall merely recall the progress made in Europe.

137. The fratricidal wars of the past now belong to history. The distrust and antagonism of former days have been replaced by *entente*, co-operation and organization.

138. The organization is, first of all, that of the Europe of the nine members of the European Economic Community: Year after year, whatever the difficulties, whatever the hazards, which sometimes come from abroad, that Europe is making progress. The United Nations knows this. When I was Permanent Representative and one or another question was being examined, so many people used to ask me, "What are the nine going to do?". This vitality of the Community stems from its very nature as the framework for reconciliation and co-operation among nations which were once enemies but which have today decided to work together. For this purpose, there have been set up structures and institutions which, instead of being fixed once and for all, are slowly but surely evolving. "Progress", wrote an author in ancient times, "is when something grows while remaining itself". This could be the motto of the European Communities. Thanks to the traditions of the States that comprise it, this group of nations has also chosen to be a centre of exchange and dialogue. Sometimes denounced for being a closed bloc, it has proved its ability to be open towards the rest of Western Europe as well as towards countries to the east of our old continent and, since the

Lomé Convention,¹¹ towards 46 countries lying across the seas.

139. The existence and soundness of the Community cannot be demonstrated better than by the passage in the address delivered yesterday by its current President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, on behalf of the member countries [7th meeting]. The French delegation fully agrees with everything he said in that capacity about economic and political problems.

140. Nothing illustrates this better, also, than the role played by the Community here at the United Nations and in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe—the culmination of several years of patient effort to end the divisions caused by the Second World War and a point of departure for a pattern of development which, with time and experience, would reveal a clearer picture of a Europe at last consistent with its geographical designation.

141. What happens on the European continent does not, however, exempt us from observing that the world is still far from the state of neighbourly relations prescribed by the Charter. There has not been a global conflict in 30 years; probably not so much because peace reigns in the full sense of the word as because destructive capabilities neutralize each other.

142. That is why France believes that, foremost among our concerns, should be the quest for an agreed disarmament between States. That undertaking, which got its start shortly after the Second World War, is marking time. Fifteen years ago the study of general plans for disarmament was in fact abandoned in favour of the study of partial measures. But the agreements reached in that direction—some of which have some merit—should not conceal the unremitting arms race, which leaves an awesome threat weighing on the world.

143. Nevertheless, some initiatives are taking shape to revise the very structures of the disarmament effort. My Government is following them with interest. It is prepared to support any proposal aimed at genuine disarmament, that is, at the effective destruction of weapons of all types, nuclear and conventional, in accordance with a reasonable time-table and under effective international control.

144. Since the very birth of the United Nations, it has been fashionable to criticize and even lampoon our Organization for its shortcomings and relative ineffectiveness.

145. I would like to say here that France does not share that scepticism. It considers the United Nations an indispensable and irreplaceable instrument for dialogue and co-operation among the peoples of the earth. It realizes that, in the maintenance of peace and in many aspects of economic development, the Organization has rendered services which are so easily forgotten because they were so effective. Lastly, it is aware of the fact that the shortcomings of the United Nations are a product of the political divisions in the world. As a mirror, it shows nations their own reflection; as a forum, it allows aspirations to be

expressed in a political and diplomatic framework; and as an instrument, it is the natural tool of those who want to use it and who know how.

146. The Organization today extends, with but a few exceptions, to the dimensions of the globe. Five years ago it took an important step in this direction—although it was merely a reasonable step—by restoring China to its rightful place here. In this way, the representatives of that immense nation were able to bring to us here the echo of the great voice that fell silent early this month.

147. The Organization must truly become a world body, that is, it must welcome the States which apply for membership once they have met the recognized criteria of international law and once they have declared their willingness to respect the Charter.

148. Accordingly, while France is pleased to welcome the admission of the Republic of Seychelles, with which it has historical affinities, it hopes that the doors of the Organization will be opened to Viet Nam—with which it particularly intends to develop its relations—to Angola and, generally speaking, to all those that request membership. By the same token, it speaks out against any attempt to prevent or suspend a State's membership. Whatever complaints are brought against the States thus threatened, such extreme measures would in no way facilitate the search for settlements—quite the contrary.

149. To find what unites us and overcome what divides us, harness our mutual determination to build and repress the instinct that urges us to destroy, work together for the liberty, happiness and dignity of mankind—that, to my mind, is a programme that is just as relevant and imperative in 1976 as it was in 1945. That is also the reason for my country's acceptance of the ideals of the Charter and the action of the United Nations.

150. This acceptance is no mere formality. It is based on the conviction that, beneath frequently militant positions, there is a large community of needs which is expressed here. Over and above the verbal battles and attempts to gain the advantage, there is a growing recognition of the real ills that beset mankind: economic crises, deterioration of the environment, mass poverty, over-population and war. Rooting out those scourges is a long-range task; but the future of coming generations and the survival of humanity are at stake. Such a task demands that concertation win over confrontation, that everyone agree to lend himself to dialogue; it demands the patient and resolute efforts of countries which are capable of looking beyond groups and blocs. France intends to be among them.

151. The PRESIDENT: Before calling on the next speaker, I should like to remind the Assembly that the list of speakers in the general debate will be closed at 6 p.m. this afternoon, in accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 4th plenary meeting.

152. It is my duty to inform the Assembly that the question has been raised whether observers could participate in the general debate. I have held consultations with those concerned and, as a result of those consultations, the understanding has been reached that, in order to avoid

¹¹ ACP-EEC Convention of Lomé, signed on 28 February 1975 at Lomé.

creating a precedent that could give rise to certain problems and could prolong the general debate beyond the period allotted to it, the matter will not be pursued.

153. I am greatly obliged to those who have helped me to arrive at this understanding for their co-operation.

154. I must make it quite clear, however, that if any speaker in the course of the general debate should make any remarks which call for a reply from an observer, I shall call on that observer in the plenary Assembly so that he may reply.

155. Mr. PEACOCK (Australia): Mr. President, the Government of Australia warmly congratulates you upon your election to the presidency of this session of our Assembly. Your charm, your manifest international experience, your innovative skill and sage judgement, all combine to make you a welcome and popular holder of the highest office of what we all hope will be a constructive and fruitful session of the General Assembly.

156. Your country and mine, Mr. President, have for long been associated in the Commonwealth—a concept and a structure which have much to contribute to this Organization.

157. We have welcomed to membership in the United Nations at this session another Commonwealth country, the Republic of Seychelles. This brings us closer to our goal of universality. Australia has been glad to see growing contact between the United Nations and the Commonwealth Secretariat; and we heartily endorse the proposal, which is being made to this Assembly, that the Commonwealth Secretariat should be given observer status [A/31/191].

158. Our relationship with the United Nations is a relationship not only with its Members but with its staff. That staff is led by our Secretary-General, and I should like today to express our appreciation for his outstanding service to the United Nations.

159. The Government of which I am a member came to office in December last year. This is our first opportunity to reaffirm in this meeting-place of nations the dedication of Australia to the principles and purposes of the United Nations and to their implementation. We remain resolved to contribute in every way we can to the work of this Organization.

160. As a new Government, naturally we have had to make our own assessment of the international scene, including the role of the United Nations. The international system has entered a period of profound change, and some of the key assumptions of recent decades no longer hold true. Some of the issues which have dominated events are now receding, while new ones are crowding on to the international agenda. Structures, as well as attitudes and values, are changing. The distinction between the political and the economic aspects of international politics is being rapidly narrowed. If these multiple changes are not to constitute a multiple crisis, they require a constructive, co-operative and imaginative response on the part of us all—a response which thinks in terms strategically and of decades, rather than tactically and in terms of instant solutions.

161. The Australian Government believes that the United Nations can and should play a key role in shaping this response. Its future importance will depend on how it meets this challenge. Because of this, we believe that now is a time when all of us could well consider how the Organization's great potential can be more fully realized. If we are to construct a new international order—and the magnitude of the changes confronting us suggests that nothing less is required—then a realistic reappraisal of the tasks and methods of the United Nations is surely timely in order to ensure that it makes the fullest contribution.

162. In this respect, we believe that one important requirement is that the General Assembly should shape concepts and establish priorities and principles which are relevant to its changing environment. Only then will it be able to concentrate its energies and resources where they are most needed and where they can be most effective. Unless we have a clear sense of which issues have priority and which issues can be realistically tackled with a hope of success, those energies and resources will be largely wasted.

163. We also believe that the United Nations will only make its full contribution at this critical time if its Members recognize that one of the principal sources of its strength lies in its moral authority. This in turn derives from the fact that it expresses—however imperfectly—some of the deepest, most fundamental aspirations of mankind.

164. It is this moral authority which constitutes the vital capital of the Organization and which gives it a purchase on events. Deprived of that authority it will become little more than an empty structure of institutional arrangements and procedures that governments can ignore with impunity. It is crucial, therefore, that it should not be deprived of that authority. Ultimately the case against arbitrary, unrealistic or discriminatory action within the framework of the United Nations rests on this. It can be stated not in terms of duty or obligation, but of good sense and foresight. As Members of the United Nations, we have an interest in maintaining its moral authority and rejecting courses of action inconsistent with it, because otherwise we shall destroy the effectiveness of the very instrument in which we have declared our faith.

165. Let me stress that none of these observations means that the Australian Government does not understand or sympathize with the desperate human problems and urgent needs which frequently underlie the actions of Members within this Assembly. On the contrary, it is precisely because we consider the solution of these problems to be so important, because we believe that far-reaching changes are required, and because we wish to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations role in that process of change, that we are concerned to make these points.

166. In the context of structural changes and the emergence of a new international order to which I have referred, primacy must be accorded to economic questions. The complex problems posed by global shortages of food and energy, the population explosion, the gap between rich and poor countries, inflation and the recession in world trade, are major sources of tension. They present the developed and developing worlds with a crucial challenge in international co-operation.

167. I was forcibly impressed at the fourth session of UNCTAD in Nairobi by the growing anxiety of developing countries that greater progress should be made towards the realization of the new international economic order. My Government recognizes the aspirations of these countries. We shall contribute willingly to the building of a stable and just international structure and we shall work for changes in the world's economic system that are practicable and viable. We believe that a satisfactory new order can be evolved only if the path is planned and realistic. To this end we must all work together through consultation and co-operation. Developed countries should stand ready collectively to subordinate some short-term economic advantages to the overriding longer-term advantage of creating and maintaining a viable international order. Australia is ready to play its part in this process. An order in which poverty, hunger and disease on a massive scale threaten the peace of regions, cannot be endured.

168. The obligations which we are willing to assume complement the enormous efforts which developing countries themselves undertake. My Government has followed with interest the attempts by developing countries to stimulate greater economic and technical co-operation among themselves. This field has barely been touched. When tilled, it is bound to be productive. A good example is the effective work of the Association of South-East Asian Nations.

169. Australia agrees on the need for improvement in the conditions of world commodity trade and recognizes that a concerted effort is necessary for progress to be made in this area. The programme of negotiations agreed to at the fourth session of UNCTAD represents a significant advance towards the resolution of the traditional problems which affect international trade in commodities of concern to developing countries. To ensure the success of these negotiations all countries must make a realistic assessment of what can be achieved before the end of 1978. Negotiated solutions must take account of all aspects of the trade and production of particular commodities, of the interests of both consumers and producers, and must be both comprehensive and equitable. Our approach to individual commodity arrangements must be flexible if we are to establish efficient mechanisms for the stabilization of commodity trade.

170. The Conference on International Economic Co-operation represents a major initiative in international relations which has Australia's strong support. Australia will continue to work—at that Conference as well as elsewhere—towards the evolution, by co-operative means, of a sound basis for future international economic progress.

171. Australia, as a significant trading nation, has also emphasized the importance of the sound recovery of the world economy and the growth of world trade as important determinants in improving the economic and social prospects of developing countries.

172. The problem of food is a particularly vital one in a world whose population is increasing so rapidly. While there has been an improvement in food production, the situation for many developing countries remains insecure. It is unacceptable that chronic starvation and malnutrition

should persist in a world which has the capacity to produce enough food. We have yet to devise machinery to ensure that each human being is adequately fed. Australia supports efforts which would lead to the establishment of an effective international system of food security.

173. External assistance can be a valuable complement to the efforts of the developing countries to achieve self-sustaining economic growth. Australian aid is provided in response to requests from developing countries, in accordance with their priorities and within the limits of Australia's own financial and technical capacities. In the fiscal year 1976/1977 Australia's development assistance—which continues to be overwhelmingly in the form of grants, not loans—will total just under \$US 500 million: an increase of 15 per cent over that of the past year. We shall, of course, continue and seek to extend this aid effort; but we shall do so fully recognizing that aid is ultimately no substitute for the structural changes which will in fact render aid largely unnecessary and that the best and most acceptable aid is that which eliminates the need for its own continuation.

174. I turn now to the problems of southern Africa, on which the attention of the international community is centred as never before.

175. The United Nations has played a crucial role in keeping before us the plight of the peoples of Zimbabwe and Namibia and has reminded each of us of our obligation to work for an early end to minority rule.

176. The Australian Government regards the dramatic development in relation to Southern Rhodesia during the last week as most significant and hopeful. The likelihood of achieving majority rule quickly and without bloodshed is now real. On behalf of my Government, I congratulate the many parties which have contributed to this break-through and hope that it will receive the widest support in this Assembly. We can appreciate the reasons for the reservations and caution with which some approach these proposals for a peaceful settlement, but we sincerely hope that a concern for absolute certainty where, in the nature of things, certainty is not possible, will not result in a failure to grasp an opportunity which the United Nations has been seeking for so long and which even a few months ago seemed unattainable. It will be a tragedy if a demand for a perfect, fool-proof solution becomes the enemy of the best available one. We urge all parties to give these proposals every possible opportunity to work.

177. Australia views with concern the Republic of South Africa's continued illegal occupation of Namibia. This concern has been demonstrated by our active participation in the work of the United Nations Council for Namibia. A constitutional settlement must be achieved peacefully and must involve SWAPO.

178. We have also watched with increasing concern events in South Africa itself over the past year. We deplore the racial violence in South Africa, which is the inevitable result of policies based on inequality between peoples. The system of *apartheid* and the exploitation of one race by another are abhorrent to us. Ultimately the iniquity of *apartheid* must be seen and the policy abandoned. Unless there are genuine and urgent moves made to redress the

well-founded black African grievances in South Africa, there can be little hope for the abatement of violence there.

179. However, our concern for the assertion of the protection of fundamental human rights is not limited to the rights of those who live in southern Africa—though we recognize that their plight is perhaps the most urgent facing us at this moment. We see importance, too, in the more general reassertion of the cause of freedom of the individual and the elimination of the indignities which man still heaps upon man: torture, forced labour, discrimination and inequality, to mention but a few. When these are associated with racism the evil is compounded, but we should never forget that they are evil in themselves and must be condemned and opposed wherever they occur.

180. Terrorism is a subject which involves fundamental issues of human rights. Regardless of the justification that its proponents advance for it, it remains a completely unacceptable form of political pressure. It is unacceptable because it is barbarous and haphazard. It undermines the general fabric of lawful and decent behaviour. Those who pursue it deliberately and flagrantly violate the right to life, liberty and protection from injury of those who are made the innocent victims of their pressures. We condemn terrorism and will join in efforts to eliminate it. Nothing would be more certain to destroy that moral authority of which I have earlier spoken than a failure to do so. We can surely muster the will and the resources to deal with this repulsive crime. We welcome the initiative of the Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany in bringing before the General Assembly a draft convention on the taking of hostages [see A/31/242].

181. I turn now to peace-keeping and disarmament, both matters of deep concern as change produces new strains and tensions within the international system. Despite the failures of our Organization to do all that is expected of it in the maintenance of peace and security, it has had real successes in its peace-keeping operations. These are supported at present by some 9,000 men in the five current operations. Australia has made a contribution to these activities.

182. I have spoken of some of the successes of the United Nations, limited though they are, in peace-keeping. This leads to consideration of the wider goal of reduction or control of conventional and nuclear armaments. This is an urgent matter and, if success is not achieved soon, it may not be achieved at all. If we fail the prospects for a viable international order in the last quarter of this century will be bleak.

183. Three central and fundamental areas where Australia looks and hopes for early progress are: first, the strengthening of measures to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons; secondly, the termination of nuclear-weapons testing in all environments; and, thirdly, further progress in strategic arms limitation agreements between the United States and the Soviet Union.

184. We are concerned not only to see the trend towards universal acceptance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons [resolution 2373 (XXII), annex] maintained but also to ensure that all its provisions are carried

out. Those nuclear-weapon Powers which are parties to the Treaty have obligations to reduce their arsenals. Other nuclear States must ratify the Treaty and accept the same obligations; and the international community as a whole must accept the application of adequate safeguards on the peaceful uses of nuclear materials in order to prevent their diversion to non-peaceful uses. Increased attention to safeguards and further multilateral efforts to strengthen the non-proliferation régime will receive our support.

Mr. Kaduma (United Republic of Tanzania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

185. Australia believes that nuclear-weapons testing in all environments should be terminated. Recognizing that this objective will be difficult to achieve, we welcome the study to be made, under the auspices of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, by a group of government experts to investigate international co-operative efforts for the detection and identification of nuclear explosions. We hope that these activities will help to establish a climate conducive to the negotiation of a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

186. Australia considers that the limitation of existing nuclear arsenals depends essentially on continued progress in strategic arms limitation negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union. We look to an early conclusion of an agreement at the second round of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks between those two countries and to further agreements placing restraints on nuclear armaments.

187. One of the principal activities of the United Nations family is the preparation of multilateral treaties. It is an integral part of the vital and dynamic role which international organizations play today.

188. The importance of the legislative function is nowhere better evidenced than in the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. This is the largest single legislative project which the international community has ever undertaken. It is essential that it should not fail, especially as its implications for the restructuring of the international economic order are profound.

189. My Government is fully committed to the achievement of a just and equitable convention on the law of the sea. But, although we recognize the complexities of the issues involved, we were disappointed at the slow progress made at the recent fifth session of the Conference. We consider it essential that the negotiating momentum be maintained during the intersessional period so that delegations can come to the sixth session in New York in May next year with the feeling that agreement is within reach. My Government will play its part in the process of negotiations and consultations to find solutions to outstanding problems.

190. A loss of will or lack of resolve now could put at risk the Herculean efforts of the last few years and usher in an era of uncertainty and difficulty, as nations may feel compelled to take unilateral action to preserve important economic interests. Success, on the other hand, will set an example and encourage a climate of optimism which will be of immense value in encouraging further co-operation in international legislation.

191. The difficulties which we are experiencing in the Conference on the Law of the Sea reflect a broader problem of which we ought to take note. Last year we suggested in the Sixth Committee during the debate on the report of the International Law Commission¹² that the time was ripe for the United Nations to review the process by which the international community legislates. The ways in which we approach multilateral treaty-making are varied, chancy, frequently experimental and often inefficient. They place great burdens upon the Governments of Member States, especially upon the developing countries, and it is open to question whether the community could not find more economical and efficient methods of drafting conventions.

192. In closing I return again to the theme I developed earlier. If I may restate it briefly, we believe that, in a world

which is changing rapidly and profoundly and which must restructure its political and economic priorities and mechanisms to meet these changes, the United Nations has a crucial role to play. We believe that it will play that role effectively only if we its Members exhibit the moderation, the sense of priorities and the realism commensurate with the gravity of the problems. We recognize, of course, that the United Nations is essentially a political body and that it will act in political terms. Our concern is that in doing so it should show a sense of practicality and restraint which reflect an awareness both of the realities of the wider international scene and of its own character. If the United Nations fails in these respects, it will strengthen the forces of cynicism and pessimism and damage its own integrity and effectiveness. If it succeeds, it will immeasurably strengthen that moral authority which provides its unique character and which is the true source of its effectiveness.

¹² See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Sixth Committee*, 1541st meeting, para. 16.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.