



General Assembly

PROVISIONAL

A/44/PV.100

25 September 1990

ENGLISH

Forty-fourth session

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDREDTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 17 September 1990, at 4 p.m.

President:

Mr. GARBA

(Nigeria)

- Policies of apartheid of the Government of South Africa [28] (continued)
 - (a) Report of the Secretary-General
 - (b) Report of the Special Political Committee
 - (c) Draft resolution
- The situation in Central America: Threats to international peace and security and peace initiatives [34] (continued)
- Question of Palestine [39] (continued)
- Armed Israeli aggression against the Iraqi nuclear installations and its grave consequences for the established international system concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and international peace and security [46]

/...

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the Official Records of the General Assembly.

Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, within one week, to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Department of Conference Services, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

90-64070/A 1256V (E)

- Question of Cyprus [47]

Consequences of the prolongation of the armed conflict between Iran and Iraq [48]

- Enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections: draft resolution [114] (continued)
- Closing address by the President
- Closure of the forty-fourth session

The meeting was called to order at 4.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 28 (continued)

POLICIES OF APARTHEID OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

- (a) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/44/960 and Add.1-3)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE (A/44/709/Add.1)
- (c) DRAFT RESOLUTION A/44/L.68

The PRESIDENT: In connection with this item, the General Assembly has before it the report of the Special Political Committee, issued as document A/44/709/Add.1.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to remind members that the debate on this item was closed on Friday, 14 September, and that a draft resolution, contained in document A/44/L.68, became available on that day.

I now call on the representative of Nigeria to introduce draft resolution A/44/L.68.

Mr. GAMBARI (Nigeria), Chairman of the Special Committee Against Apartheid: I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/44/L.68, on progress made in the implementation of the Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa.

At the outset, I wish to report to the General Assembly that the draft resolution before it, which we hope will obtain the support of all Member States, has been the successful result of intensive consultations with various delegations during the last five days.

(Mr. Gambari, Chairman, Special
Committee against Apartheid)

On behalf of the Bureau of the Special Committee against Apartheid, I take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation for the support and co-operation displayed by all delegations in this effort. A great number of representatives, from all regional groups, assisted the Bureau and me diligently, imaginatively and constructively in fine tuning the draft text. It was very encouraging to see that the experience and spirit that brought about the consensus on the Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa was maintained and that it led to the text of the draft resolution now before the Assembly.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank all representatives who were instrumental and helpful in the lengthy and detailed drafting process. Their patience and perseverance made the successful completion of the draft text possible. I wish also to thank the Centre against Apartheid for its hospitality and for its role in facilitating our work.

To reach a consensus text always requires compromise and flexibility, and at the same time an avoidance of the sacrifice of principles or the burying of facts. Above all, the text should be relevant to and supportive of the process that is unfolding inside South Africa. I am proud to say that the text before the Assembly has achieved those objectives. I very much hope, therefore, that the spirit of co-operation experienced over the past few days will allow the adoption of the draft resolution before us by consensus.

The draft resolution takes as a framework and a starting-point the historic consensus Declaration adopted last December and even uses identical language to the extent possible. The first preambular paragraphs recall the Declaration and the request contained in it to the South African régime to take a number of steps to create a climate suitable for negotiations and the call on the international

(Mr. Gambari, Chairman, Special
Committee against Apartheid)

community not to relax existing measures until there is clear evidence of profound and irreversible changes in South Africa.

The fourth preambular paragraph notes that Members of the United Nations and the international community have generally adhered to the programme of action contained in the Declaration; at the same time it expresses concern at departures that have occurred from the international consensus reflected in the Declaration.

As members will recall, paragraph 10 of the Declaration requests the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly a report on the progress made in the implementation of the Declaration. That report, which formed the basis of our discussions over the past three days, contains the observations of the Secretary-General and the detailed findings of the mission he dispatched last June to South Africa, as well as replies of Member States, of which the Assembly has taken careful note. The fifth preambular paragraph mentions this, and welcomes the contribution the Secretary-General has made on the subject. The draft resolution also takes note of the report (A/44/963) of the Monitoring Group of the Ad Hoc Committee on Southern Africa of the Organization of African Unity, as well as of other statements and reports from Member States and regional groups on the issue.

The eighth preambular paragraph takes note of the declared commitment of the Government of Mr. De Klerk to abolish apartheid and of the number of significant measures in the right direction that have been taken by the régime; it suggests that continued efforts are needed to establish a climate fully conducive to negotiations and free political activity. The ongoing talks between the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the South African régime aimed at eliminating obstacles to the beginning of substantive negotiations, and the results achieved so far in the meetings in Cape Town and Pretoria, are welcomed in the ninth preambular paragraph.

(Mr. Gambari, Chairman, Special
Committee against Apartheid)

Finally, the tenth preambular paragraph expresses the Assembly's grave concern at the escalating violence resulting largely from the continued existence of the apartheid policies, practices and structures and from the actions of those opposed to the democratic transformation of South Africa. Indeed, the wave of violence that has in recent times become almost a daily occurrence in South Africa was a subject raised by all the speakers in this debate and about which the Secretary-General himself has expressed his deep anguish and deep concern.

The operative paragraphs reaffirm the need for the full and immediate implementation of the Declaration and declare that further steps need to be undertaken by the South African régime in order to implement the profound and irreversible changes called for in the Declaration.

Paragraph 3 calls upon all Governments and intergovernmental organizations to adhere strictly to the programme of action and to maintain existing measures aimed at encouraging the régime to eradicate apartheid.

In paragraph 4 Pretoria is called upon to proceed without delay to establish a climate fully conducive to negotiations by taking all the steps mentioned in the Declaration and in the light of its commitment to repeal all legislation designed to circumscribe political activity.

In paragraph 5 the draft resolution calls for an immediate end to violence and urges the South African authorities to take urgent action to end it. Concern over activities of elements of the security forces regarding the instigation and treatment of violence is reflected in that paragraph in its call upon South Africa to ensure effective and impartial action by the security forces. Furthermore, there is a call on all parties concerned to contribute to the establishment of a climate free of violence, as required in the Declaration.

(Mr. Gambari, Chairman, Special
Committee against Apartheid)

Paragraph 6 welcomes the talks between the ANC and the South African authorities and the results achieved at their meetings, which aim at facilitating the beginning of substantive negotiations. Recognizing the initiative taken by the ANC in calling for talks, paragraph 7 commends the ANC for that initiative and for its extremely important decision to suspend the armed struggle.

Paragraphs 8 and 9 introduce a new element which has emerged since the adoption of the Declaration, namely the need to assist the re-establishment of previously banned political organizations and the integration of political prisoners who have been released or are expected to be released in future months. The international community and the Secretary-General are asked to provide all possible assistance for that purpose. Further, the Secretary-General is requested to provide assistance, through the relevant United Nations agencies, for instance the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), for the repatriation of South African refugees and political exiles. The South African authorities, the liberation movements and other organizations in South Africa and the international community are requested to support this endeavour.

In its final paragraph, the draft resolution recognizes the importance of the contribution the Secretary-General can make, requesting him to remain actively seized of developments in South Africa and to submit by 30 June 1991 a report on the further implementation of the Declaration.

I believe the draft resolution is a clear message to the South African authorities that, while the General Assembly has taken full note of all the positive steps they have taken in the past few months, much more needs to be done. It acknowledges the importance of the contacts between the Government and the ANC in assisting this process and at the same time considers that the current violence in South Africa needs urgently to be curbed. That is the primarily responsibility

(Mr. Gambari, Chairman, Special
Committee against Apartheid)

of the South African régime, which must be made to ensure that its security forces act with effectiveness and impartiality. It is also an endeavour in which all South Africans should take part with determination. Finally, the draft resolution is a new pledge by the international community to adhere strictly to the programme of action and to maintain the pressure which at this stage is considered necessary to assist the encouraging process that has just started in South Africa.

On behalf of all the delegations that participated in formulating the present draft resolution, on behalf of the Special Committee against Apartheid, and on behalf of my Government, I appeal to the General Assembly to adopt this draft resolution by consensus.

I have reason, Sir, to hope that today you will end your brilliant and productive term as President of the General Assembly with one more act of unanimity by this body on an issue to which you personally and all of us attach the highest importance.

The PRESIDENT: I call now on representatives who wish speak in explanation of voting before the voting on draft resolution A/44/L.68. May I recall that in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401 explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. MOORE (United States of America): It is a privilege, Mr. President, to be participating in this session of the General Assembly under your firm hand and stern visage. I salute your leadership, particularly on the subject to which we are initially devoting our attention this afternoon. We also want to thank all those who participated in achieving this consensus for their spirit of co-operation and resolve.

Finding consensus is always a challenging endeavour in human affairs, as all in this Assembly are aware. The United States is joining consensus on this draft resolution not because we are in full agreement with all of its content or because we consider it an optimally balanced measure, but because we consider it important to demonstrate the extent of continuing international solidarity in support of the internal negotiating process taking shape in South Africa. We recall that the Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its special session on South Africa last December reaffirmed

"the right of all peoples, including the people of South Africa, to determine their own destiny and to work out for themselves the institutions and the system of government under which they will, by general consent, live and work together to build a harmonious society". (resolution S-16/1, annex)

The Declaration encouraged the people of South Africa

"to join together to negotiate an end to the apartheid system and agree on all the measures that are necessary to transform their country into a non-racial democracy".

(Mr. Moore, United States)

There are no simple roadmaps or mile-posts for marking progress on the negotiating path, and the process will not be easy. But the evolution of political life in South Africa is in fact moving forward more quickly and much further than we had reason to hope. We believe that both President De Klerk and Mr. Mandela have offered bold and imaginative leadership which was responsible in large measure for the agreement reached in August between the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the Government on removing all identified obstacles to the commencement of full-fledged negotiations.

We thus consider it important for the international community to do everything possible to encourage the internal negotiating process in South Africa, to support leaders already engaged in that process and to urge others to commit themselves to peaceful negotiations as well. South African political leaders on all sides deserve to have an unambiguous signal of international support for the noble effort they are beginning.

The people of the United States had the opportunity to express their support for Nelson Mandela's commitment to this process during his recent visit to this country, when he met with President Bush and addressed a joint session of Congress. We are pleased that President De Klerk has also accepted President Bush's invitation to visit Washington for further discussions on 24 September.

It is a sign of global recognition of the dramatic progress being made in South Africa that international resolutions no longer speak explicitly of economic sanctions - much less calling for heightened pressure - but refer instead to the need for continuing existing measures aimed at encouraging sustained efforts to eradicate apartheid. We believe it is appropriate for all States which have imposed such measures to take advantage of opportunities to recognize significant progress as the negotiating process proceeds. Our own economic sanctions are based

(Mr. Moore, United States)

on the comprehensive anti-apartheid Act of 1986, which explicitly spells out the steps which must be taken in South Africa before the United States could consider relaxation or suspension of any sanctions.

As we turn our attention in the coming days to the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly and an eventual discussion once again of apartheid, it is my Government's hope that we can build on today's consensus to encourage further the process of peaceful change and negotiation. We can do no less, given the importance we all attach to the dismantling of apartheid.

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/44/L.68. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt this draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/44/L.68 was adopted (resolution 44/244).

The PRESIDENT: Before calling on those representatives who wish to explain their position on the resolution just adopted, I once again remind delegations that in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401 explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. PELLICER (Mexico) (interpretation from Spanish): The delegation of Mexico listened very carefully to the debate that has taken place over the past few days on the report of the Secretary-General on the policies of apartheid of the Government of South Africa. Mexico has no diplomatic or consular relations with South Africa, and our trade with that country is non-existent. We are convinced that only by applying strict sanctions can we some day make the Government of South Africa give up its racist policies.

Mexico has been following with special attention the measures taken since last February by the Government of President De Klerk of South Africa to begin dismantling the racist régime. We are convinced that such a régime must be uprooted, leaving behind no vestiges that could permit the return of those

(Mrs Pellicer, Mexico)

policies. In that context, the Mexican delegation welcomes the progress made in South Africa to eliminate the policies of apartheid, to release all political prisoners and detainees, to repeal prohibitions and restrictions on banned organizations and persons, to withdraw troops from the townships, and to repeal laws intended to circumscribe political activity in South Africa. Those are some of the steps taken by the De Klerk Government which will help attain the goal of eliminating those policies.

But in our view this is not enough. Mexico, together with all other members of the international community, will continue to fight until the day we celebrate the total eradication of the policies of apartheid. As rightly noted in the report of the Secretary-General, some progress has been made.

(Mrs. Pellicer, Mexico)

However, we wish to emphasize that much remains to be done. Major efforts must still be carried out in order to bring about a peaceful political settlement of the situation in South Africa. Mexico is convinced that the denunciation and condemnation by the international community are essential elements in reaching such a settlement. For all those reasons, my delegation supported the resolution just adopted.

Mr. RICHARDSON (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom is pleased to have been able to join the consensus on the resolution just adopted. The United Nations is united in its opposition to apartheid and in its strong desire to see it totally abolished and replaced with a non-racial democracy in South Africa. The resolution we have just adopted reaffirms that unity of purpose and we are delighted that it was adopted, Sir, before, sadly, your term as our President expires.

We regret, however, that this resolution misses important opportunities. It understates the significant changes which have occurred in South Africa since our Declaration of last December and which were identified in the Secretary-General's report. In particular, it fails to give full credit to the African National Congress and to the South African Government for their important achievement at talks in Pretoria only last month, when the two parties agreed "that the way was now open to proceed towards negotiations on a new constitution". This is what we have been calling for and, indeed, working for, for many years. The General Assembly should welcome this wholeheartedly and should urge all parties to seize the opportunity now presented to create a new South Africa through peaceful negotiations.

The present violence in South Africa is a matter of grave concern to my Government. It is primarily for the South African Government to restore peace, but all leaders in South Africa bear a heavy responsibility to help bring violence to

(Mr. Richardson, United Kingdom)

an end so that political differences can be settled peacefully. We here should urge them to act accordingly.

A process of change is under way in South Africa. We have, accordingly, adapted our policies. We have maintained a number of existing restrictive measures but, like several other countries, have relaxed certain other measures and we have taken some positive steps, such as expanding our aid programme with the objective of encouraging further progress. We regard this approach as entirely consistent with the Declaration adopted by this Assembly last December. We consider that nothing in the resolution just adopted should prevent any country from making its own judgements about how to respond to positive moves by the South African Government. Pressure has to be applied intelligently if it is to achieve the aim we all want to see, a new South Africa.

Although the resolution is unsatisfactory on some of these points, the United Kingdom wishes to preserve a consensus in this Organization and we are glad that this is, indeed, what has happened.

The PRESIDENT: In accordance with a decision taken by the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 22 September 1989, I now call on the representative of the African National Congress of South Africa.

Mr. MAFOLE (African National Congress of South Africa (ANC)): By adopting this resolution by consensus, the United Nations has once again spoken in one voice. Speaking on behalf of the international community, the United Nations has said that we are no longer prepared to continue to quibble and to argue acrimoniously about apartheid when apartheid continues to wreak havoc on the people of the region and of South Africa. We are very happy, therefore, that, building on the tradition that was started with the adoption of the historic Declaration at the end of last year, we have once again adopted this common position by consensus.

(Mr. Mafole, ANC)

From the point of view of the African National Congress, the adopted text could not be said to be a highly satisfactory one. As we have always said, if the African National Congress had had the option of preparing the draft for the United Nations, then certainly the text that we would have come up with would have been totally different. However, we are very pleased that this text was adopted, particularly to the extent that it has addressed certain of our key concerns. We are very happy that this text has, in the first instance, answered one specific question, a question that is raised by our own agenda: whether or not, after the adoption of the Declaration, the South African régime has in fact created a climate conducive to negotiations. This is a particularly important question because a number of people, precisely as a result of the measures that have been adopted by the South African régime since 2 February and also because of the talks that the South African régime has held with the African National Congress, have sought to put the point across that by those acts alone the South African régime has answered the question - in other words, it has addressed the issue of meeting those requirements that are called for in the Declaration. We are very happy that the resolution does in fact say that the South African régime has not addressed that question and calls upon the régime to do so.

We are also happy that the resolution deals very seriously with a question that is of primary concern to the African National Congress and to the people of South Africa, namely, the issue of the ongoing violence which is claiming hundreds of lives. We are very happy that the United Nations has seen fit to address this question and to put it in its proper perspective and, in fact, to underline that it is precisely because of the continuing existence of apartheid that today there can be a situation that is so explosive in South Africa. The resolution says that in order for that situation to be adequately addressed it is up to the South African régime to speed up the process of dismantling apartheid.

(Mr. Mafole, ANC)

The third issue very adequately addressed by the resolution is the question of what to do, given the fact that the South African Government has not responded in full to the demands and dictates of the Declaration. We are also gratified that the resolution does in fact say that those measures that have been undertaken by the international community should be retained.

What will this resolution do for the people of South Africa? I think it is important to underline that this resolution will serve as a very great source of inspiration and encouragement for the African National Congress and for the people of South Africa, because it will show that the people of South Africa, in fact, are on the right course and that they have the support of the international community in their search for the elimination of apartheid by peaceful means. It is to be hoped that the international community will also pay close attention to a paragraph in the resolution which encourages and calls for support in the process of reintegrating those former political prisoners in South Africa and also those thousands and thousands of South Africans in exile as a result of apartheid. We hope that the Member States will pay very close attention to that and will support the effort very generously.

As has already been stated, arriving at a consensus resolution had not been very easy. We should like, on behalf of the African National Congress, to express our gratitude to all those who participated in the formulation of this resolution. We know that much effort was exerted in that direction. We should like to thank, in particular, the Special Committee against Apartheid for its tireless efforts, as well as its Chairman, Mr. Gambari. We should also like to register our profound appreciation to the Center against Apartheid. We also thank very sincerely the members of the front-line States and the members of the African Group for all their effort in helping to shape this consensus resolution. Finally, on behalf of the African National Congress, I wish to express our appreciation to the

(Mr. Mafole, ANC)

Secretary-General for all the efforts he has exerted on this question, let alone, Sir, your own efforts as President of the General Assembly and as former Chairman of the Special Committee. We should like to say how gratified we are at the fact that you are once again presiding over a meeting of the General Assembly at which a consensus resolution, has been adopted, as you have indeed been presiding over the session that also adopted the historic Declaration.

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 28.

AGENDA ITEM 34 (continued)

THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA: THREATS TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY AND PEACE INITIATIVES

The PRESIDENT: Members may recall that the Assembly has adopted resolutions 44/10 of 23 October 1989 and 44/240 of 29 December 1989 on this item. As members know, the item on the situation in Central America has been included in the provisional agenda for the forty-fifth session of the Assembly.

May I take it that the Assembly considers that discussion of this item at the present session is concluded?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 34.

AGENDA ITEM 39 (continued)

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

The PRESIDENT: Members may recall that the Assembly has adopted resolution 44/2 of 6 October 1989 and resolutions 44/41 A to C and 44/42 of 6 December 1989 on this item. As members know, the item on the question of Palestine has been included on the provisional agenda for the forty-fifth session of the Assembly.

May I take it that the Assembly considers that discussion of this item at the present session is concluded?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 39.

AGENDA ITEM 46

ARMED ISRAELI AGGRESSION AGAINST THE IRAQI NUCLEAR INSTALLATIONS AND ITS GRAVE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE ESTABLISHED INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM CONCERNING THE PEACEFUL USES OF NUCLEAR ENERGY, THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly decided on 22 September 1989 to include this item in the agenda of the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

(The President)

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda for the forty-fifth session?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 46.

AGENDA ITEM 47

QUESTION OF CYPRUS

The PRESIDENT: Members will recall that on 22 September 1989 the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session but deferred a decision on the allocation of the item to an appropriate time during the session. It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it then that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda for the forty-fifth session?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 47.

AGENDA ITEM 48

CONSEQUENCES OF THE PROLONGATION OF THE ARMED CONFLICT BETWEEN IRAN AND IRAQ

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly decided on 22 September 1988 to include this item on the agenda at the forty-fourth session. It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda for the forty-fifth session?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 48.

AGENDA ITEM 114 (continued)

ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PRINCIPLE OF PERIODIC AND GENUINE ELECTIONS:
DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/44/L.67)

The PRESIDENT: Members will recall that this item was reopened on 20 July 1990 and that draft resolution A/44/L.67, entitled "Assistance to Haiti" was introduced on Wednesday, 12 September. It is my understanding that this matter will not be considered at this stage.

May I take it then that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this matter?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 114.

CLOSING ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT

The PRESIDENT: Not all of the distinguished persons in the Assembly Hall today were present at the start of the forty-fourth session in September of last year. Some members may therefore be unaware of just how tentative the new spirit of compromise and consensus that now pervades our world was at that time. None of us could have failed to note, however, the extraordinary change in the image and fortunes of the Organization - the United Nations - during the past year.

Where previously there was a gratuitous media reference to United Nations decisions or activities perhaps once a month, now there are incessant references to United Nations deliberations in all the media. We fully appreciate that this spotlight derives in large measure from the dangerous and escalating tensions in the Gulf region; this spotlight none the less serves to illuminate other problems, disputes and claims in the previously shadowed periphery of international awareness. All these are steadily progressing into the realm of United Nations negotiation and peaceful conflict resolution. An anonymous but uncanny visionary once noted that:

(The President)

"the future is related, and indeed indebted, to the past, and can only be perceived meaningfully and projected realistically in the context and against the background of historical experience".

Now, as we near the end of the first 45 years of United Nations history, and prepare ourselves to embark upon the forty-fifth session of General Assembly activity, the startling changes, in spirit and in perception of the Organization's significance and relevance, merit, I dare say, more than a cursory glance.

Governments in all countries and of very differing political persuasions have continually affirmed, since the first session of the General Assembly, and in as many as possible of their public statements, solid commitment to the United Nations and to all its purposes and principles. They have continued to express, as often as they decently can - sometimes in defiance of contradictory internal situations - their determination to uphold its objectives and to strengthen its effectiveness in every possible manner. Such extraordinary expressions of commitment - yet, the United Nations was simultaneously being accused of irrelevancy and incompetence. Why, I may ask, this contradiction?

(The President)

More often than not, there was an undertow of desperation to statements of solidarity: the words had become an act of faith, an incantation which all felt obliged to pronounce, but in which no great confidence was felt. The United Nations was impotent. Many of the criticisms then levelled at this institution contained more than a grain of truth; the great majority, however, were based on very real conceptions of the United Nations as something above and beyond reality, as a mythical Utopian entity that should be free of all mortal feelings. There was a need for a sharp reminder and this was bluntly delivered in 1954 by John Foster Dulles. He said:

"The United Nations was not set up to be a reformatory. It was assumed that you would be good before you got in and not that being in would make you good."

Our most sympathetic detractors claim that the United Nations - and the Assembly in particular - has managed to function despite the Members rather than in concert with them. Ironically, while individual Governments continue to exert their sovereign rights in the pursuit of the "national interest", their ever-watchful agencies and media institutions were busily pointing the finger, declaring with derision that the United Nations had failed.

Whenever the United Nations fails, it is because we, its Members, have failed. When one Member breaks ranks, the side is no longer invincible and is threatened with destruction.

We must acknowledge, even if only subconsciously, that the United Nations can never be anything but a mirror of the world as it is. The United Nations is merely an assemblage of the multiplicity of individual national States with all their imperfections. When the Member States were bellicose, the United Nations was full of bellicosity. When the world was a world of cold war, the United Nations was a system of cold war, particularly in its first 15 years. When the world was one of

(The President)

rich/poor confrontation as it appeared in the 1970s, so also was the United Nations. And if the world is now beset with nationalism, so too would be the United Nations. The United Nations is as good or as bad as the States which compose it.

This realization has been slow in coming, but its arrival is no less welcome.

The forty-fourth session of the General Assembly witnessed the gradual assumption by the United Nations of a new confidence and status as it crossed the threshold to regain its long-vacant post of facilitator of world peace and security. The three special sessions which deliberated on the destabilizing and dehumanizing impact of poverty arising from underdevelopment, drug trafficking and abuse, and the nightmare of apartheid, each produced a consensus declaration. The Assembly not only asserted itself on the essential issues of our time but demonstrated, for all time, the remarkable achievement lying well within our grasp when political will is maintained.

It is worth recalling that during the forty-fourth session, Namibia claimed its independence and assumed its rightful place as the 160th Member State of our Organization. In adopting the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session gave an unlimited guarantee that our civilization will accord due attention to the inalienable rights of children to be safeguarded, to live in a protected family environment free from persecution and neglect. This is but the foundation. It is a foundation, however, because children in poverty-stricken, drug-contaminated and violent societies, and children enduring under an inhuman apartheid régime certainly cannot be considered to exist within an environment imparting dignity, tolerance, equality, solidarity, freedom and, indeed, peace.

(The President)

This Assembly also emphasized its support of the growing détente between East and West. On 15 November 1989, in unanimously adopting resolution 44/21 on "Enhancing international peace, security and international co-operation in all its aspects in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations", we reiterated our collective belief that in an independent world, global peace and security can, and must, be rooted in the work of the United Nations - in the codified rules and principles of peace, security and international co-operation laid down in the Charter. In this context of the enhancement of world peace, the Assembly welcomed the free and fair elections in Nicaragua and looks with high expectations towards the Haitian Government and people for the fulfilment of a similar democratic potential. The painstaking efforts of all those involved in the intricate peace-making arrangements in Cambodia have been noted with increasing optimism by the Assembly - an optimism not misplaced now that Prince Sihanouk has announced his intention to preside over the Supreme National Congress in compliance with the terms of the United Nations Peace Plan. And the Assembly applauded as Trinidad and Tobago set us all an example by resolving an internal difficulty and averting a full-scale crisis through adroit negotiation. We commend it.

The peace dividend of détente has been met with welcome relief, endorsed fully by the Assembly and rehearsed exhaustively by the world's media. But the real significance of the rapprochement, however, lies in its impact on the role and functioning of the United Nations. It was Sir Winston Churchill who, in 1955, commented with remarkable foresight that "the United Nations was set up, not to get us to heaven, but only to save us from hell".

The 15 members of the Security Council ably discharged such a mandate by forestalling with skill and dexterity what appeared as an assured, inevitable war in the Persian Gulf region. Nevertheless, the Security Council, within the context

(The President)

of an organization struggling to be reborn, is heir to impulses which are only half-formed and, indeed, half understood. It must be given time in an atmosphere of consensus and unrepenting solidarity to discern, formulate and execute its responsibilities. This will require the renewed commitment to the principles of the Charter by every Member State, as Dag Hammarskjöld, who spent many long hours in these chambers and in the Security Council, would undoubtedly reiterate were he alive today. His wise counsel is worth recalling at precisely those moments when problems before the Council are at their most intractable - those sessions wherein fact and feeling become so entangled that despair looms. He wrote:

"Never accept what can be gained by giving in. You will be living off stolen goods and your muscles will atrophy."

(The President)

It is a matter for regret that the same degree of concern, commitment and collective responsibility as has been applied to global political, strategic and security matters has not yet been extended to the human imperatives of the less privileged of our world. Just as détente has been achieved by discarding rigid ideologies, so too is a review of the rigid economic doctrines long overdue. The latest World Bank report on poverty paints a stark and rapidly worsening picture of poverty, which threatens to destabilize our world order at least as effectively if not as rapidly as any conflict we now see in the Gulf region. In recognition of these human imperatives, therefore, it is hardly surprising that it is the incidence of human suffering - the appalling plight of foreign victims of the Gulf crisis, menaced by their host with starvation in defiance of their rights under international humanitarian law - that is poised to undermine the consensus and purposeful functioning of the Security Council and, by default, of this Organization. In the Gulf as elsewhere, humanitarian repercussions cannot be tidily divorced from economic and political issues, in particular when the conflict itself is conceived in legal/moral terms.

As we conclude this forty-fourth session, we are mindful that the 245 resolutions and associated decisions taken are geared towards specific issues and precise purposes. We are mindful too that consensus does not necessarily translate into "democracy in action". When all is said and done, consensus is meaningless if identified objectives are not crystallized through effective implementation into tangible results. It is therefore vital that delegations carry this momentum of vision, consensus and courage into and well beyond the forty-fifth session.

It would be most remiss of me to close this session without citing for the record the diligent assistance of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly. One man in particular, the Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda, my dear friend

(The President)

The closure of the forty-fourth session can in no way be construed as "work done"; much unfinished business remains to confront the forty-fifth session. The Palestinians continue to expect and demand their own sovereign State, as do the people of Western Sahara. The peoples of Liberia and El Salvador deserve to live in peace and security.

It is upon such delicate tasks that our collective future is anchored. Again I quote Dag Hammarskjöld, who once enjoined that

"a task becomes a duty the moment you suspect it to be an essential part of that integrity which alone entitles a man or woman to assume responsibility".

The challenge to keep sight of the wood in spite of the trees is an enormous one. The responsibility for defending our collective interests effectively is yours alone. Failure cannot and must never be contemplated.

CLOSURE OF THE FORTY-FOURTH SESSION

The PRESIDENT: I now have the honour to declare the forty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly closed. May your God be with you at all times.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.

(The President)

Mr. Lionel Hurst, has been unflagging in his efforts to discharge this responsibility. To him I owe a debt of gratitude. The Chairmen of the Main Committees and the various Chairmen of the respective regional groups have been generous with their advice and support during the past year. To all these colleagues I owe considerable gratitude. I wish also to express my profound appreciation to my own country, Nigeria, to its representative, Ibrahim Gambari, and his staff, and to the African Group for the privilege of presiding over the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

It has been a very great honour to work so closely with that untiring champion of peace, the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, whose recent efforts in the Middle East were entirely in keeping with his exemplary and unparalleled record for empathy, initiative, discretion and foresight in the pursuit of peaceful endeavours. The Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs, Mr. Ron Spiers, has been and I am sure will continue to be a tower of strength who quietly but effectively facilitated all. So many others, on the scene and behind it, including my presidential and personal staff, have diligently oiled this delicate negotiating machinery. Any success attributed to the forty-fourth session must in no small measure be shared with them.

And now you all, distinguished colleagues, generously facilitated the effective implementation of procedural innovations designed to enhance the effectiveness of our work. In discharging these and other duties as President of this forty-fourth session, I have neglected, perhaps predictably, to please everyone all of the time. Such a shortcoming has however been made more palatable not only through the understanding, civility and encouragement of my colleagues, but also in the knowledge that my actions were at all times based on an understanding of the collective interest as defined and delimited by our times.