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President: Mr. Carlos SOSA RODRIGUEZ  
(Venezuela).

### Address by Mr. Sean F. Lemass, Prime Minister of Ireland

1. The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I now invite the Prime Minister of Ireland to address the Assembly.

2. Mr. LEMASS (Prime Minister of Ireland): Mr. President, may I in the first place thank you and the distinguished representatives for making it possible for me to address the General Assembly of the United Nations here this afternoon. It is an opportunity which I welcome and value greatly not only because this Assembly is what it is, the most widely representative organ of the United Nations, but also because for us in Ireland—as, I am sure for most if not all of the countries represented here—the further strengthening of the role of the United Nations in international relations is a positive and an important objective of our foreign policy.

3. This is far from being a purely idealistic or visionary approach. For us, having regard to the circumstances of the world today, it is a matter of common sense, of political realism, and of national self-interest. Throughout the centuries idealistic philosophers, inspired by the concept of the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God or by the simple dictates of humanity, earnestly strove to find means of sparing mankind the scourge of war and propounded schemes for reorganizing world society with that end in view. The idealism which prompted these efforts in the past has always had a strong appeal for us in Ireland because from the earliest times we Irish have had a keen sense of active involvement in the fate of the world beyond our shores, from whence came not only armies of invaders but the religious and cultural influences which have shaped our national characteristics.

4. But in the circumstances in which we live today, international organization for the maintenance of peace and stability throughout the world has become much more than a matter of abstract idealism. It is now nothing less than an imperative of the world environment in which we live. The bewildering advances made by modern science and technology, and the far-reaching and largely unforeseen political changes which have come about in the world, even since the Charter of the United Nations was signed, have as their consequence

that the fate of mankind today is at the mercy of physical and political forces of a scale and magnitude hitherto unknown in history.

5. To harmonize and control these forces in the interests of peace and the betterment of humanity as a whole is the primary purpose and the solemn duty of the United Nations. That the United Nations should fail in that task or ignore that duty is to us unthinkable. It would mean that the world community would thereby forfeit its brightest, and perhaps its last, hope of establishing an effective control over its own future destiny. No sacrifice or obligation which membership of the United Nations could possibly involve for any of us could ever justify so foolish and short-sighted a betrayal of our larger interests. On behalf of the Irish people, I reiterate our total commitment to the aims of the United Nations, and our willingness to accept all the obligations which this commitment may impose on us.

6. The chorus of approval which greeted the recent signing of the limited test ban treaty<sup>1/</sup> demonstrated the extent to which all peoples have become alive to the many and appalling perils of the atomic age. What is not so keenly appreciated, perhaps, is how much still remains to be done to render those perils more and more remote and how useful and effective a means of achieving that end is provided by the machinery of this Organization and the opportunities for continuous collective discussion and negotiation which it affords.

7. Just forty-one days elapsed between the signing of the United Nations Charter and the dawn of the atomic age. Further historians may well speculate on the significance of the relationship in time between the two events. But there is little room for doubt or speculation about their relationship in fact. The onset of the atomic era profoundly altered the pre-existing structure of world relations. It relegated to the lumber-room of history some of the most fundamental concepts which had shaped foreign policies in the past. It meant that thenceforward the term "national security" could never again have quite the same significance which it had before because, from then on, the only kind of security which could guarantee the safety and survival of any of our countries would be world security. The pursuit of peace thus ceased to be merely an aim of national policy and became the collective interest and the collective responsibility of world society to a greater extent than ever before in history; and it is through the United Nations—in which the opinions of the world community as a whole find their clearest and most authoritative expression—that that interest must be pursued and that responsibility discharged.

8. It is the earnest hope of the Irish Government, that in accordance with the intentions expressed at the time by the major Powers themselves and reiterated

<sup>1/</sup> Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, signed at Moscow on 5 August 1963.

here, the agreement recently reached in Moscow will prove merely the forerunner of further measures of agreement in the field of disarmament. The striking speeches made to the General Assembly by the President of the United States [1209th meeting], and the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union [1208th meeting], and the reception accorded to their statements by the representatives of other Powers, strengthen the hopes which were engendered by the test ban treaty and warrant the belief that this Assembly may yet mark a decisive stage in the movement of the Powers towards international agreements which will further reduce the dangers of nuclear conflict. Any further advances which can be made in that field—however slight their substance—will contribute invaluable towards improving the international atmosphere and relaxing further the tensions of the cold war. From that point of view, they will deserve—however limited their scope—to be greeted with feelings of satisfaction and relief by the world community. If there is one aspect of the armaments race, however, which causes us in Ireland more concern and alarm than another, it is the danger of the possible increase in the number of countries of the world possessing atomic or nuclear weapons.

9. It is hardly necessary for me here today to repeat the various considerations in connexion with this matter which our Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Aiken, has so often urged on the Assembly. It is all the less necessary for me to do so perhaps in view of the clear recognition of the reality and the magnitude of this danger expressed in recent statements of other Governments, including the Governments of some of the major Powers. I would strongly urge, however, that now that the question of testing has been disposed of to the extent to which agreement on that subject is possible at the present time, the logical corollary of that welcome development is an agreement designed to prevent the further dissemination of atomic and nuclear armaments. I would earnestly suggest that the negotiation and conclusion of such an agreement should now have first priority in our further efforts to arrest the course of the armaments race.

10. But if science and technology have completely transformed the world's material environment within the eighteen years which have elapsed since the signing of the Charter, other forces have also been at work which have radically altered the whole political configuration of world society as well. I have in mind particularly the tremendous upsurge of the spirit of freedom in lands formerly subject to colonial rule which has had the effect—which even the framers of the Charter themselves can hardly have foreseen—of more than doubling the membership of the United Nations within the first two decades of its existence. I believe that we have yet to realize fully all the consequences and implications of this great and revolutionary change. It is much more than a mere episode in the history of our times. It is not too much to say, I think, that it marks the opening of an entirely new chapter in the history of mankind. In the new countries of Asia and Africa which have become Members of this Organization since 1945, the United Nations has acquired a new dimension, a new frontier; and it seems to me a fair prediction that one way or another the whole future of human society is going to be profoundly affected by what happens on that frontier in the years ahead.

11. It is not necessary for me, I am sure, to tell this Assembly that the steady process by which so many countries of Asia and Africa have achieved their national freedom and independence since 1945 has been

followed by the people of Ireland with profound sympathy and satisfaction. How could it be otherwise in view of our own history? Ireland was the first of the small nations of the twentieth century to win victory in its struggle for independence. But more than eighty years ago, before the twentieth century had yet begun, the then leader of the Irish nation, Charles Stewart Parnell, pledged himself and his followers to the principle that the cause of nationality is sacred in Asia and Africa as well as in Ireland; and that is just as much a basic principle of our political thinking in Ireland today as it was with Parnell and with those of my own generation who felt impelled to assert in arms the right of our people to freedom and self-determination.

12. In our view—perhaps because our own experience was so different—the most outstanding and gratifying feature of the tremendous transformation which the political structure of world society has undergone since 1945 is that, with relatively few exceptions, it has been accomplished peacefully without the necessity for recourse to force. Lasting credit for this is due to the good judgement and statesmanship of the national leaders of the new countries. Great credit is also owing to the wisdom and sense of realism of the former colonial Powers. We in Ireland have watched with particular sympathy the efforts made by the British Government to resolve the complex colonial problems still confronting it on the continent of Africa and elsewhere. Those efforts encourage us to hope that we in Ireland may yet be able to count on the same measure of British goodwill and enlightened self-interest in resolving the problems which were created for us by the partitioning of our own country.

13. This Organization, too, has played a vital role in this great evolution. It has provided peoples struggling to be free with a great world forum in which their claims to independence could be openly advanced and advocated. By its steady support of the principle of national self-determination, it has inspired those peoples with a feeling of confidence that their national aspirations could and would be realized without the need for resorting to arms. By its firm championship of the cause of national freedom and independence it has helped to make patience bearable in situations in which impatience is only too apt to erupt into violence.

14. Unhappily, situations exist on the continent of Africa today which threaten this very danger. We in Ireland are deeply convinced that the spirit of freedom, the urge of subject peoples to be independent and free to determine their own destinies, is a virtually irresistible force in world politics today. In our view, all efforts to curb that spirit or to deny it legitimate expression are doomed to ultimate failure. We believe that sooner or later that spirit is certain to prevail against all the forces arrayed against it, whether they take the form of claims to political privilege based on racial discrimination or assumptions of power dating from the colonial past. We fervently hope that the legitimate aspirations of all the peoples of Africa will be fully realized before long by peaceful means. We shrink from the thought of the situation which will be created, not only throughout Africa but throughout the world and in the United Nations itself, if that hope is disappointed. We are all under a solemn obligation by virtue of the Charter to support the peoples of Africa—as elsewhere in the world—in their efforts to establish their claim to equal rights and national self-determination. But we are also bound by the Charter to do our utmost to ensure that that objective will be

attained peaceably without recourse to violence or bloodshed. An armed struggle with racial overtones on the continent of Africa would be an untold disaster for humanity from every point of view. But, in particular, it would immensely aggravate the difficulty of solving a problem which is in a sense as great a threat to world peace and stability as colonialism itself—I mean the great and growing disparity in standards of living and welfare which exists between the under-developed areas of Africa and the rest of the Southern Hemisphere on the one hand, and the highly industrialized countries of the Northern Hemisphere on the other.

15. If I may, I should like to digress for a moment at this point to pay a tribute of respect and admiration on behalf of the Irish Government to our distinguished Secretary-General, U Thant. We believe that the United Nations is indeed fortunate to have as its Chief Executive at this time a man of U Thant's integrity and wisdom and profound devotion to the cause of humanity. The eminent qualities of political insight and high moral purpose which distinguish the Secretary-General are constantly reflected in his discharge of the duties of his office, and characteristic of them, perhaps, is the statement in his introduction to his annual report to the General Assembly last year<sup>2/</sup> in which the Secretary-General said that the present division of the world into rich and poor countries was, in his opinion, much more real and much more serious, and ultimately much more explosive, than the division of the world on ideological grounds.

16. It would be foolish, and indeed dangerous, to ignore the force of that statement. Surely it is a delusion to think that the richer countries of the world can expect to go on enjoying all the blessings of material progress and a peaceful and stable order as long as there are millions and millions of people in other parts of the world living on the very verge of starvation, with infant mortality rates of as much as 200 per thousand, a life expectancy of thirty-five years or less and an average per capita income of as little as \$40 or \$45. Surely to harbour such a delusion would be to behave like the aristocracy at the Court of Versailles on the eve of the French Revolution and to forget that human misery and the lack of bread can be a no less fertile source of great political and social upheavals than ideology.

17. Nor, in our view, can this be regarded by the better-off countries as purely a matter of material self-interest although even from that point of view, they have substantial advantages to gain. Not only have they a definite interest in preserving the peace and stability of the world order as a whole, but the agricultural surpluses and excess industrial capacity which are starting to emerge in many of their economies underline the need for ensuring a constantly rising level of world investment, consumption and trade. But of course, the matter is not simply one of material interest at all. It is also one of moral obligation. In the highly interdependent and closely integrated world society in which we live today, it is indefensible to regard the dictates of humanity and social obligation as coming to a full stop at our national frontiers or to think that in our dealings with the less fortunate areas of the world, those of us who are better off are justified in ignoring completely the principles of social justice which we endeavor to uphold and follow in our

domestic policies. The time has come, in our belief, when we must all accept and get used to the idea that the existence of human ignorance, poverty and disease anywhere in the world is a challenge to the conscience of mankind, and that those Members of the world community who are in a position to do so are under a moral obligation to help the countries in which these evils persist, in their efforts to get rid of them.

18. But the less developed countries have also a vital role to play. It is easily understandable that countries which have endured the bitter experience of foreign rule should be chary about running even the slightest risk of exchanging one form of outside influence for another. It is only natural that, for that reason, many of these countries would prefer that the financial resources required for their economic development should be made available to them through international channels rather than by individual governments bilaterally.

19. The time may come when it will be possible to satisfy that preference. But it would be unrealistic to think that that time has yet arrived. With world society organized as it is today, it is only too clear that an adequate inflow of investment funds so urgently needed by new countries for their development can only be achieved by the action of governments in the case of the highly socialized countries and can be supplemented by the action of individual Governments and the private investor in the case of the free and mixed economies.

20. It would be regrettable, in our view, if investment of this kind in the developing countries were to be identified with "neo-colonialism". No newly-independent country—in particular no country which has suffered from the kind of neglect for which colonialism has been so often responsible—can be expected to finance its own development entirely out of the sacrifices of its own people. New countries have invariably welcomed foreign investment to their own advantage in the past and none of them has suffered any loss of sovereignty or independence by so doing. This view is supported by our experience in Ireland. We believe that with things as they are, the most direct and hopeful approach to the problem of economic underdevelopment lies in the creation of an atmosphere of mutual confidence between the developed and developing countries conducive to a steadily increasing flow of investment funds. We hope that the developing countries will regard it as being in their own best interests to do everything in their power to encourage such a movement, and we believe that with the means at their disposal they can do so successfully without the slightest prejudice to the independent policies which they pursue in world affairs.

21. Looking at the matter from this point of view, it seems to us that the United Nations Development Decade and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, fixed for 1964, will depend very largely for their success on the ability of the world community as a whole to display a new and sharper sense of mutual obligation and common interest. By its work over the past eighteen years, however, the United Nations has done more to shape the outlook of world society in that direction than most people realize. It is not too much to say, perhaps, that, largely by reason of our day-to-day co-operation here in the United Nations, there is gradually developing in world affairs a new attitude of mind which may yet have a saving, if not a decisive, influence on all our destinies. It is the

<sup>2/</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventeenth Session, Supplement No. 1A (A/5201/Add.1), sect. VI.

attitude of mind which found such lofty and eloquent expression in the last encyclical of the late Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*.

22. It is a platitude to say that the United Nations is merely a mirror which reflects world society as it is. No doubt there is truth in the platitude but perhaps not the whole truth. It is true that the United Nations is made up of nation-states whose policies are determined in the last resort by what their respective Governments consider to be their own best national interests. But it is also true, I think, that as a result of constantly looking at itself in the mirror of the United Nations the world community has come to know itself better. It has become more conscious of itself, more accustomed to thinking and acting like a community, to shaping common goals and acting collectively to achieve them. In consequence of this, I believe, our respective nation-states have imperceptibly but steadily developed a stronger sense of common interest and solidarity, and world society as a whole has become much more sharply aware of its own essential unity and interdependence. It seems to me inevitable and necessary that, as time goes on, the policies of all our countries, great and small alike, should be influenced more and more by this awareness and less and less by the narrow and short-sighted calculations of purely selfish advantage which so often shaped them in the past.

23. In our participation in the work of the United Nations we strive to be guided by a just balance between our duty to ourselves on the one hand and our duty as a member of the world community on the other. And there is a special justification for such an aim in our case. Few nations in history had to struggle so long as the people of Ireland to achieve their national freedom and independence; and, largely as a consequence of that long and bitter struggle, few races are so widely spread throughout the world today as the Irish. These two central facts of our national history condition our outlook on world affairs. We hold as sacred the right of nations to be free and independent. And yet we share to a large degree the sentiment expressed, over 125 years ago, by the famous American abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, in the phrase: "Our country is the world—our countrymen are all man-

kind". At the time when it was written that phrase was perhaps little more than a pious aspiration. But in the circumstances of the modern atomic age, it is little less than a literal truth. We are convinced that the growing acceptance of the simple truth that we are all, as human beings, living members of a universal family of mankind must inspire the continuing efforts of the United Nations to prove equal—in its structure and in its means—to the magnitude and the nobility of its tasks.

24. The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Excellency the Prime Minister of Ireland for the important address which we have just heard.

#### Organization of work

25. The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I want to confirm that tomorrow—Friday, 18 October—we shall have two plenary meetings: in the morning, at 10.30 a.m. prompt, we shall elect three non-permanent members of the Security Council and six members of the Economic and Social Council; in the afternoon, at 3 p.m., we shall consider the report of the Fifth Committee on agenda item 59 [A/5567], referring to cost estimates for the United Nations Operation in the Congo. As soon as we have completed our consideration of that item, we shall continue with agenda item 80. As I announced at the last meeting, the list of speakers on this item will be closed at 6 p.m. today. Twenty-four speakers have so far taken the floor in the debate on this item, and twenty-eight more have put their names down on the list; it is possible that other names will be added to the list before it is closed. In this connexion, I should like to ask speakers to keep their statements as brief as possible. I am sure that all delegations will be grateful for any effort to achieve such brevity and to facilitate in any way the consideration of this and other items on the agenda.

26. On Monday, 21 October, we shall hold two meetings. In the morning, we shall continue with our consideration of item 80, if we have not completed it on Friday; in the afternoon, we shall proceed to the election of five judges of the International Court of Justice.

*The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.*