

United Nations GENERAL ASSEMBLY

TWENTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records



1411th
PLENARY MEETING

Wednesday, 21 September 1966,
at 3.30 p.m.

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|------|
| <i>Address by Mr. Ferdinand E. Marcos, President of the Philippines</i> | 1 |

President: Mr. Abdul Rahman PAZHWAQ (Afghanistan).

Address by Mr. Ferdinand E. Marcos, President of the Philippines

1. The PRESIDENT: It gives me great pleasure to invite His Excellency, Mr. Ferdinand E. Marcos, President of the Philippines, to address the General Assembly.

2. Mr. MARCOS (President of the Philippines): Allow me, first of all, Mr. President, to extend my congratulations to the General Assembly for its wisdom in having elected you to preside over the deliberations of its twenty-first session. That a distinguished son of Asia should be chosen to preside at this time seems to me in the fitness of things, for in the past several months the grave threats to peace and the challenges to the authority of the United Nations have come from Asia and Africa. It seems fitting, therefore, that the earnest search for the solution to these grave problems should be undertaken under the leadership of an Afghan diplomat, whose native land, lying athwart the intersecting lines of power and dominion in the very heart of Asia, is especially interested in mitigating conflict and promoting the healing of the wounds of Asia as well as of the world.

3. This is not the first time that I have spoken from this podium. This hall is not unfamiliar to me, for on many an occasion I have represented my country here as a delegate. It is my privilege to speak before you now as the leader of thirty-two million people of the Republic of the Philippines.

4. I come from an Asian country whose shores have been washed, over many centuries, by the tidal ebb and flow of empire. Its peoples come from forebears who, with their neighbours, share a cultural inheritance that was enriched by the Arabic, the Hindu and the Chinese civilizations. Upon this Oriental base a nation was formed that was ultimately to be influenced from the West, first through Spain and later through the United States of America. This was the country that was the first in Asia and Africa to mount an anti-colonial revolution, in 1896, and to declare and proclaim, in 1898, a republic.

5. These are the credentials of my country. In 1946 the United States of America recognized our

political independence, and since then my country and my people have sought to rediscover the ancient springs of their national identity, to be identified with Asia, to help in moulding the destiny of Asia.

6. The second half of the twentieth century maybe characterizes itself as a new century, ushered in by a radical decade. This new century that was to distinguish the climate of the post-war world was properly presided over by the spirit of internationalism. Thus was a large and symbolic significance given to the organization of the United Nations in 1945. Its intentions proclaimed the controlling interest of the new politics as the rejection of war for the settlement of international disputes and the promotion of peace on a universal scale.

7. The Charter of the United Nations thus became a new decalogue of a new faith of the new century. And yet, before the terms of universal peace could even be articulated properly, there was discord among the nations, especially among the big Powers themselves, which had been so instrumental in organizing the United Nations.

8. The ideal of unity itself was seriously challenged. Disagreement within this Assembly led to the organization of blocs and, in the reality of the international community, the organization of spheres of influence. The General Assembly seemed to mirror the reality of these seemingly irreconcilable divisions. Instead of the One World which the Charter had affirmed, there was a progressive fragmentation of the nations along ideological, social and economic lines. There was a so-called free world and there was a communist world; there was the world of the big Powers and the world of the satellites; there was a Western and an Eastern world. And now there are the developed and the under-developed worlds. These terms are not merely verbal, for it is evident that the conceptual divisions of our universe correspond to actual situations and real distinctions.

9. One of the most ironic facts of our civilization is that while yearly we convene here in the General Assembly to speak of peace, we have witnessed at the same time the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Nations and Powers seem to be bent upon increasing their capability for war rather than upon utilizing their strength for the attainment of international peace. I would say that we have gone back to the heresy of traditional politics: that in order to achieve peace, we must prepare for and even wage war.

10. Against this background, therefore, the question is posed: What, then, is the destiny of Asia? The

destiny of Asia is, I believe, the destiny which it shares with the whole world, but more specifically, with the developing nations of Africa and Latin America: the attainment of the goals envisaged by the Charter of the United Nations, that is, social progress and better standards of life in wider freedom.

11. The last world war, while preserving the freedom of the European peoples, also led, perhaps unintentionally, to the liquidation of colonialism, and 1,800 million people emerged as free nations. Out of these, 85 per cent—1,500 million people—are in Asia, mainly on the Chinese mainland, the Indian sub-continent, the Indochinese and Malayan peninsulas, the two archipelagos of Indonesia and the Philippines, and the Middle East.

12. It was an essential condition to the survival and progress of these liberated nations that they have an opportunity to consolidate their independence and establish such political and social institutions as they might decide for themselves and of their own free choice, and to co-operate in the maintenance of peace. And so, today, we are faced with the question of Viet-Nam.

13. The case for bringing the war in Viet-Nam to the conference table is beyond dispute, and all of us must give loyal support to any attempt to arrest the deterioration of this conflict into a war of catastrophic proportions. I am happy to note that the Secretary-General has taken steps in this direction. It is unfortunate that his efforts have not been properly supported.

14. For several months now, since February, several Asian States—my country among them—have been attempting to bring about a dialogue between North and South Viet-Nam. Perhaps it is now time to consider what I have suggested before, namely, the possibility of the organization of a political counterpart of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East [ECAFE] within the framework of the United Nations Charter. Such an organization would frankly recognize and accept the diversity of political beliefs in Asia. It would be a political forum to which urgent issues such as Viet-Nam could be referred. There are other forums of this nature in other areas of the world, but, unfortunately, there is so far no such forum in Asia.

15. The principle that the Asian peoples themselves have the inescapable obligation to devise Asian solutions to Asian problems is at once so just and so indisputably right that Hanoi and Peking will be under strong moral obligation to relax their hostile attitude. At least, this is our fervent prayer.

16. Not so long ago, the Soviet Union achieved a successful diplomatic manoeuvre by negotiating the Peace of Tashkent. That effort, while serving no special interest of the Soviet Union, contributed vitally to the peace and stability of the Indian sub-continent. In the spirit of that achievement, may I reiterate the request of the nations of Asia—Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines among them—that all countries of the world, including the Soviet Union, act with equal boldness and imagination by calling a new Tashkent for South-East Asia in order to end

the brutal war in South Viet-Nam. For we have in Viet-Nam today a people which, for twenty-five years, has known suffering and war and has more than earned the right to be left alone, to be free and to live in peace with its neighbours. Yet, through no wish of its own, its country has been chosen as the testing ground for a new dogma of universal and perpetual revolution—war by proxy. We have watched this from a distance knowing the meaning of subversion; and, intimate with the cruel connotations of guerilla warfare and insurgency, we suffer with Viet-Nam.

17. The Philippines has sent a 2,000-man civic action group to South Viet-Nam. It is composed of engineers and security units. The objective is not war, but peace. The dispatch of these units is for reconstruction, not destruction, and is in accordance with the traditions of my country. For fifteen years now we have been sending to the Indo-Chinese peninsula doctors and nurses to succour the sick and needy people of Viet-Nam and Laos. We do not wish to add to the sufferings of the people of South Viet-Nam; on the contrary, we look forward to a negotiated settlement of this war whereby the North and the South, together with their respective allies, would agree to a cessation of hostilities until such time as the Viet-Nameese people as a whole can freely determine its own destiny in accordance with the principle of self-determination.

18. To the great Powers directly or indirectly involved in that conflict we address an appeal to bear constantly in mind their primary responsibility for keeping the peace and to use their strength and resources not to advance their own particular political hegemonies or their special economic interests, but rather to advance the welfare of all mankind.

19. It staggers the mind to consider the cost of the Viet-Nam war in terms of human, natural and financial resources. If those resources were harnessed to constructive ends, they would be large enough to reverse the, as yet, negative results of the United Nations Development Decade. This, however, suggests the possibility that the proposed Asian peace conference on Viet-Nam might include not only the establishment of a truce, but also the consideration of concrete proposals that would not only repair the material damage caused by the war, but organize and finance projects for the improvement of the region, such as the Lower Mekong Basin Development Project. There is a substantial reserve of good will to sustain such a co-operative effort, as has been demonstrated by the broad support for the Asian Development Bank, with headquarters in our city of Manila, and by the ready acceptance of the Declaration of Honolulu of 8 February 1966^{1/} concerning social revolution for Viet-Nam, even as violence continues in that country.

20. These are not the only developments that limn with hope the gloomy picture of South-East Asia. In the space of a few months, normal relations have been restored between my country and Malaysia, between the Philippines and Singapore. Through Asian

^{1/} See *The Department of State Bulletin* (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.), vol. LIV, p. 305.

diplomacy, in which the Philippines has happily participated, the Indonesian confrontation with Malaysia has been dismantled, and today Indonesia's responsible leaders give assurance of their wish to return to the United Nations. As an Asian leader, and speaking for all those who have missed the wisdom of Indonesia's counsel in international relations, I hope that Indonesia may soon return to the fold of the United Nations.

21. Indonesia is the largest and perhaps the most important country in South-East Asia. Its absence from the councils of the United Nations has left a void in our midst. It has much to contribute to the day-to-day activities of this Organization as well as to its long-range and future development based on the lofty ideals embodied in its Charter. Because it is an ancient nation proud of its distinctive national identity and its priceless heritage of centuries-old culture, Indonesia is devoted to the principles of self-help and self-reliance and it is certainly firmly convinced that the tenets of international law must be pursued. We look forward, therefore, to the return of Indonesia to the United Nations family as a neighbour, as a brother nation, and as an ally in the age-old, world-wide struggle on behalf of the freedom and dignity of man.

22. Despite all the problems that beset our region, we feel that we are approaching a watershed in the history of South-East Asia. That time will come when there will be moderation on the part of everyone, especially among those who now seek to encourage subversion, and when everyone, especially in Asia, will be willing to live in tolerance and in peace with his neighbours.

23. The United Nations was conceived as a force for international peace and security. For twenty years it has served to mediate between the rival blocs of the East and the West. In recent years, these rivalries have abated in Europe, but now they have exploded in Asia, and communist China is one of the protagonists. Regrettably, the question is not even on the agenda of the United Nations, and I feel that the United Nations has thus evaded its primordial responsibility under the Charter.

24. In the second place, the United Nations is a force for greater equality. It has vital responsibilities for the speedy granting of independence to colonial and dependent territories. It seeks to stop the violation of human rights wherever it may occur, including all forms of racial discrimination, especially its most virulent manifestation, apartheid, and to narrow the widening gap between the rich and the poor nations of the world. For one of the most serious problems that the United Nations and, for that matter, all the countries of the world must soon face is the long-range problem of the bipolarization of the world all over again into rich and poor nations along the lines of colonialism, for the rich nations are the old colonizers and the poor nations are the old colonies.

25. Whatever may be said of the achievements of the United Nations in the field of decolonization and the promotion of human rights, as our Secretary-General has more than once forcefully said, the Development Decade, now in its sixth year, is moving backwards instead of forwards, and the tragedy is that we con-

tinue to debate. Debate may help to mitigate conflict and thus enable the United Nations to serve as a force for peace, but it cannot surmount the great divide between the rich and the poor nations. Only through effective action will the United Nations be able to become a significant force for the greater equality that we seek in this world.

26. The United Nations is not a world government and the General Assembly is not a world parliament, but when we contemplate the problems of war in Viet-Nam, the problems of Southern Rhodesia and South West Africa, the stubborn issues of disarmament, even the continuing financial crisis which besets the United Nations—all of which becloud its future—one could almost wish that the United Nations were indeed a world government and that the General Assembly were a world parliament. But the reality is that the rules for amending the Charter ensure that, under present conditions, the United Nations will never be a world government.

27. What, then, is the alternative? For the present, the choice seems to be to accept candidly the fact that the United Nations is a tool for diplomatic negotiations fashioned by 118 nation-States, each jealous of its national sovereignty. To promote the acceptance of increasing derogation of national sovereignty in favour of the collective authority of the United Nations—this would appear to be the limit to efforts to strengthen the United Nations at the present time. It would imply readiness to discuss the question of Viet-Nam, regardless of the misgivings and the reservations of certain nations. It would mean sincere support for measures to impose obedience on Members of the United Nations. It would involve patient negotiation, the tedious and trying step-by-step attempt to achieve the grand design of complete and universal disarmament—to attain that ultimate objective, not by one magic stroke, but by simple, practical processes. It would mean readiness to forgo winning mere debating points, as we try to do here, in favour of making one, just one, heartening gesture of faith in the Organization, of solidarity among ourselves, by helping to bail out the United Nations from the crippling and humiliating insolvency which faces it. All of us have a role to play and a contribution to make in this undertaking.

28. For the United Nations itself, there is a clear and admitted need to perfect its organization, to improve the techniques employed in its manifold operations, and to bring to its work, particularly in the developing countries, an even greater sense of mission and dedication.

29. Now perhaps it is time to speak of the review and revision of the Charter of the United Nations, which is already years overdue and which perhaps can no longer be deferred. A whole new world has emerged since 1945, and the Charter should faithfully reflect the realities and the vital needs of this new world. Only thus can the United Nations become an instrument fully responsive to the aims and aspirations of Member nations. To the developing countries, including my own, I would, speaking from the heart, address the following appeal.

30. Let us redouble our efforts at self-help, with the aim of reducing to the absolute minimum the burden which our need for economic aid imposes on the United Nations and the developed countries. Let us exercise our right to do our utmost for the well-being of our own peoples. When we shall have done all that is humanly possible for our own peoples, for the economic and social development of our own countries, if there should remain a vital margin between success and failure, between poverty and prosperity, which it is not within our capacity to fill—no matter how heroic our efforts may be—then let that margin, and that margin alone, be the measure of the demand which we could then make it good conscience upon the international society.

31. Let us, through the practice of social justice and the deliberate fostering of civil liberties, mitigate as much as possible the social tensions among our own peoples and by that much reduce the sum total of tensions that beset our world.

32. Let us compose our own differences and resolve our quarrels peacefully and justly, thereby eliminating the areas of conflict in our own neighbourhoods. Let us remove from the agenda of this Assembly as many disputes as we can settle ourselves. Let us act with sincerity and firm purpose to avoid or put an end to small wars which have a way of growing into major international crises.

33. There is intrinsic merit in the task of putting our own houses in order. It is also an act of wisdom. For if we, the small nations, do not settle our own quarrels, the big Powers will come in and settle them for us.

34. Let us not underestimate the inherent value and the cumulative effect of small contributions to peace. A recent example comes to mind. I have already referred to the dismantling of the confrontation between Malaysia and Indonesia. Rising above protocol, the Indonesian Government put an end to its armed confrontation with Malaysia by means of a peace agreement under which there were, as the Indonesian Foreign Minister observed, "No winners, except the Malay people" to which both Malaysia and Indonesia belong—and, happily, the Philippines also.

35. As a result, the political climate in our immediate vicinity was transformed almost overnight from one of tension and conflict to one of peace and enhanced prospects for fruitful co-operation. This change for the better has not produced many headlines or much front-page news, as has the war in Viet-Nam. But it has brought forth something significant: that there is a nucleus of peace and stability in an area of crisis and conflict.

36. By itself, such a nucleus of reconciliation might not have much impact. But if it could have counterparts in other areas where local conflicts are still amenable to neighbourly solutions, the total effect might be a considerable contribution to the peace of the whole world.

37. Finally, conscious of the righteousness of our cause, but cognizant also of the need for a new brotherhood of man, let us leave the past behind and meet other countries half way whenever they may come for-

ward in a sincere desire for joint endeavour in building a more secure, more stable, more prosperous world.

38. And now, in all sincerity and with due respect for the requirements of propriety, permit me to address an earnest appeal to the developed nations, especially the great Powers.

39. We ask the great Powers, first of all, to make yet one more final and all-out effort to break the political stalemate in order that they might be able to discharge their primary obligation under the United Nations Charter to ensure world peace and establish a workable system of collective security; secondly, to devise an effective system of international control leading to the eventual elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction; thirdly, to complete the programme of disarmament which would enable them to fulfil their promise to use part of the savings accruing from the termination of the armaments race for the acceleration of economic and social progress throughout the world; fourthly, to use the United Nations as a major instrument in a concerted effort to arrest the economic bipolarization of the world into the rich and the poor nations; fifthly, to complete the liquidation of colonialism and remove its last vestiges from a world that has no longer any place or justification for it; and finally, to remove the developing regions, once and for all, from the arena of cold war contention wherein there is no place for small nations, and to give them the time, the stable conditions and the assistance which the small nations need for unmolested growth.

40. All this we must do as we sharpen the United Nations as a tool for diplomatic negotiation, for I cannot believe that this, our race, is doomed by the death-wish and irresistibly drawn to self-destruction and disaster. Rather let us demonstrate that we are intelligent human beings possessing skill and will enough to utilize the United Nations to ensure not only man's survival, but also his growth and greatness.

41. In the earnest effort to achieve these goals, we have enjoyed in the United Nations for the past five years the wise and dedicated guidance of the Secretary-General, U Thant. For reasons that do him honour as a man of conscience and a man of peace, he has declined to offer himself for a second term. While respecting the reasons which he has given, we would invoke these very reasons in asking him to stay. The office of Secretary-General is a unique priesthood of selfless service and sacrifice. At certain times, it may become an office of indefinite tenure. Such a time is now. U Thant has served the cause of peace nobly, in many ways. Let us with one voice ask him to stay with us awhile and, by so doing, perhaps perform his greatest service to mankind.

42. And having asked this of him, let every Member State in turn candidly examine its own conscience. Let every Government ask itself what it has failed to do in the past for the United Nations, and what it can do today and tomorrow so that a man of principle like U Thant may, in conscience, agree to continue serving our Organization.

43. The challenge is not to the great Powers alone, not only to the United States or the Soviet Union.

This is a challenge to the entire community of States, for the problems of world security and development transcend regional boundaries. Their effects and implications, for good or ill, are global in their dimensions, and they hammer home in crisis after crisis the one central fact of our existence—that our world is one, one in technology, in economics, in vulnerability to the atomic weapons of war and in long-term welfare, and one in the ultimate destiny of the human species.

44. The time-lag between awareness and action on the implications of the irreversible oneness of our world cannot be extended indefinitely without mortal danger to mankind. Before it is too late, a world-wide framework of peace, orderly co-operation and coexistence must be built, enabling East and West, North and South, to work together, and together enrich and prolong man's life span on earth. Only in the larger context can lasting solutions be found to the problems of the world.

45. With profound gratitude Asia, like the rest of the world, acknowledges the great achievements already recorded by the United Nations during the first twenty years of its existence. In any history of our time, pride of place must be accorded to the invaluable services of the United Nations in the promotion of human rights and the development of international co-operation for economic and social progress.

46. In an age less convulsed than our own by revolutionary changes, these far-reaching achievements might have proved sufficient unto themselves. But our times and the state of our world demand much more of the United Nations; they require nothing less than the full implementation of the Charter and the realization of the United Nations' maximum potential for universal peace and human betterment. And in the accomplishment of this task, Herculean by any standard, the threat of atomic annihilation by mistake or miscalculation imposes an almost impossibly short deadline. We stand in danger of failure to meet

this deadline unless we summon the energy and the will to match the magnitude and the urgency of the challenge with a response both timely and adequate.

47. We cannot defer much longer the decision on the kind of world we really want. Do we wish to continue on our present course, paying lip-service to internationalism and yet indulging ourselves in self-serving purposes inimical to the long-range interests of a truly international community? Shall we dally and remain content with half-measures on the important life-and-death issue of disarmament that can only postpone, and only for a relatively short time, the fateful day of reckoning? Shall we permit, in defiance of the clear dictates of wisdom, the permanent division of the world into rich and poor nations, with all that such a tragic cleavage portends for the future of mankind?

48. The crisis in Asia warns us to pause and reconsider our position while there is yet time to change course. Do we really want a growing free world, secure in its peaceful pursuits, co-existing in harmony and moving confidently towards a better life for all? Do we truly want the kind of world blue-printed in the Charter, not as a distant dream or illusion but as an attainable objective within the framework of the United Nations? Let every nation now examine its own conscience and answer these questions.

49. This session may be the one final opportunity for redemption, for the time of decision is upon us. We must act in concert. We must act decisively. The imperatives of survival dictate no other course. Today let us say and proclaim: let man once more be the master of all creation and not the slave of his own heritage.

50. The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Philippines for the important statement he has just made.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.