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AGENDA ITEM 9

General debate (*continued*)

1. Mr. MEDEIROS QUEREJAZU (Bolivia) (*translated from Spanish*): Madam President, I do not wish merely to congratulate you on your election as a matter of form, but rather to recall something of the spirit of hope and vitality which you expressed in your introductory address, especially when you said that the United Nations is:

“... the best means of international co-operation that mankind has had at his disposal since the beginning of his history and we have to nurse it and cherish and cultivate it, or else we shall one day perish and not even the moon or the knowledge of space will save us.” [1753rd meeting, para. 50.]

2. It is likewise my duty to convey to the representative of Guatemala my Government's condolences on the premature death of its distinguished Foreign Minister, Emilio Arenales, who so skilfully guided the deliberations of the twenty-third session of this Assembly.

3. The conquest of space, travel to the moon, the probes sent out to Mars and Venus are triumphs for technology and hence for human intelligence. Yet, how little man has achieved for himself! How small he seems when he looks into his own soul and realizes the weakness of the moral forces which sustain him and the narrowness of the limits of his power on earth! The formulas for social balance have not yet made their appearance, and this century knows no elixir of well-being or happiness. It is useless to stimulate the yearning for the infinite while man, like this planet on which he dwells, remains hopeless and alone.

4. It will soon be twenty-five years since the United Nations came into being as a promise of peace and hope for the peoples who once overcame the destructive power of nazism. The United Nations was not, however, conceived to enhance man's glory and pride, but to serve him, to bring a little light into the darkness of poverty and ignorance. Where, then lies the hidden source of the blight which is spoiling the fruit of so many illusions?

5. It will soon be twenty-five years since the founding of the United Nations; ten years since the Declaration against colonialism [resolution 1514 (XV)]; the Second United Nations Development Decade is soon to begin; Human Rights Year has been celebrated, and another year is to be dedicated to education. Noble and beautiful promises—yet nuclear weapons still proliferate and men die in Viet-Nam, in the Middle East and in Biafra. There are leaders who export revolutions, and racial hatred discriminates against the child in school.

6. My country can contribute little to the solution of these major problems, but it has taken a firm and consistent position in defence of the principles that inspire the Charter and uphold the right of peoples to freedom and justice.

7. The war in Viet-Nam must be brought to an end as soon as possible, without sacrificing the peoples who aspire to govern themselves. In the Middle East we have to take as our starting point the existence of Israel as a sovereign State recognized by the world community and a Member of our Organization. Any independent nation has the right to protect its security, but from our own historical experience we firmly maintain the principle that conquest gives no rights.

8. We are against all forms of colonialism. We are in favour of the observance of human rights throughout the world. We consider that the First United Nations Development Decade has been a disappointment, and we hope that the Second will be backed by a more generous attitude on the part of the industrialized countries, so that the growth of the developing countries may pass from the phase of noble sentiments to the achievement of specific objectives which will make it possible to narrow the gap dividing the great Powers from the small countries. The Second Development Decade, therefore, entails a great responsibility for the United Nations and confronts its various organs and agencies with a cast-iron dilemma: to make progress or perish.

9. It would not be right for me to confine myself solely to the negative side of United Nations affairs. This Assembly can and must respond positively to many causes of concern. There is, of course, a group of new items which, precisely because they are new, may lead to beneficial arrangements: the use of outer space for peaceful purposes; the establishment of nuclear-free zones; the reservation of the sea-bed for the benefit of developing countries, including those that have no coastlines.

10. The Secretary-General, whose position enables him to perceive the risks that threaten mankind, has just proposed

that we devote a decade to disarmament starting in 1970. His programme is simple and, at the same time, practical:

"A concerted and concentrated effort during this Disarmament Decade to limit and reduce nuclear and other weapons of massive destruction, to reduce conventional weapons and to deal with all the related problems of disarmament and security, could produce concrete, measurable progress towards general and complete disarmament by the end of the decade of the seventies." [A/7601/Add.1, para. 43.]

11. This would, moreover, coincide with the United Nations Second Development Decade, and no perspicacity is needed to recognize that the two programmes are parallel. If the resources which now serve to maintain the arms race could be diverted to development instead, mankind would have fulfilled a mission, not only of peace, but also of progress and happiness. The Secretary-General, U Thant, has rightly said that development is the long, slow road that leads to peace. This is not just a phrase inspired by the disappointments or hopes of a hundred peoples in pursuit of well-being. There can be no doubt that a sustained effort to promote economic co-operation and investment is impossible unless the resources now being earmarked for arms manufacture are released and channelled elsewhere. Proof of that lies in the experience of the United Nations and in the meagre results of the many measures approved by this Assembly, such as the giving of voluntary contributions to the Capital Development Fund and the Industrial Development Organization.

12. Nor are the results of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) encouraging. Many countries have received with bitterness the recent confession of the Trade and Development Board to the effect that it had made very little progress in its contribution to the strategy for the Second Decade. We are still far from implementing the decisions adopted by UNCTAD at New Delhi in 1968, and now there is a growing prospect of further frustration for a world divided between hunger, despair and illiteracy.

13. In Latin America development is closely linked to integration. Its goals seem to be necessarily bound up with the establishment of economic units within a broader market, balanced and harmonious economic growth, the formation of industries designed to complement one another, a common external tariff system and the joint use of internal and external financial resources, as well as with the planning of the infrastructure and the increased productivity of the agricultural sector.

14. The Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA), conceived originally as a mechanism for freeing trade within the area, is gradually evolving into a common market, and in the course of this year we have established, within the framework of LAFTA, the Subregional Integration Agreement, which brings together Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru in an up-to-date attempt to overcome the isolation of countries with small populations and potential wealth.

15. Within this process of subregional integration Bolivia has, however, persisted in its view that this process cannot

be a substitute for its claim to have its own sovereign exit to the Pacific Ocean, a claim that combines the need and the right to solve a problem which restricts its development prospects and freedom to communicate with the world:

16. In May of this year the Latin American nations approved the Consensus of Viña del Mar,¹ a document which summarizes the position taken by that part of the world in regard to international co-operation. It is an expression of the collective personality of peoples who share a common tradition and destiny but are weighed down by the shackles that hinder their development. We are convinced that nothing can take the place of our own efforts. However, they are not enough in themselves, and to some extent they depend on the co-operation of the international community, especially of the industrial Powers which possess the technical and financial means to bring about progress.

17. There is yet another postulate that must be repeated here: economic development cannot be an end in itself. It would lack foresight if it did not include the concept of social development. Indeed, there would be little value in stimulating the growth of national wealth unless it secured a better standard of living for the world's population and enabled it to enjoy the benefits of civilization and culture.

18. In the light of these reflections, it is not easy to understand why the United Nations has still not reached agreement on the drafting of a declaration on social development. It must be recognized, however, that this Organization is constantly concerned with social questions, especially with those that relate to land reform and the participation of the people in development. Bolivia, in point of fact, is one of the countries which fifteen years ago put into effect a plan of land reform that has turned the peasant into a land-owner and freed him from his serfdom. Having achieved these objectives, we must now look to rural development, and to that end a financial, administrative and technical corporation has been established.

19. It is gratifying to record the assistance Bolivia has received from the United Nations in this regard and the work done by the various missions that have been sent to my country. It is equally a source of satisfaction to note that the agenda of the present Assembly session includes matters in which the Organization is doing fruitful work, namely housing, building and planning; a review of the World Food Programme; the elimination of all forms of religious and racial intolerance; freedom of information; the United Nations Children's Fund; and the promotion and defence of human rights.

20. From this lofty rostrum it is right to applaud any contribution to peace and solidarity among nations. It is therefore fitting to stress the work of the Organization of American States and what it represents as a regional arrangement within the meaning of Article 52 of the Charter. Barely two months ago a conflict that had arisen between El Salvador and Honduras brought the regional machinery into play. The meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs² succeeded in restoring peace

¹ Consensus of Viña del Mar (Chile), approved by the Special Commission on Latin American Co-ordination which met at Viña del Mar from 15 to 17 May 1969.

² Held at Washington, D.C., on 26 February 1969.

between the two peoples, while at the same time reaffirming the validity of two principles essential to international coexistence: the one which proscribes the use of force in disputes between States, and the other which relates to the dignity of the human person and the rule of a universal moral law.

21. To those principles, which form the framework of the United Nations, there must be added the principle of non-intervention, which denounces those who export revolution and foment subversion and hatred in other countries. As everyone knows, Bolivia has been the subject of a certain amount of international notoriety which we did not seek and do not wish to see repeated—notoriety caused by just such foreign intervention, the only result of which was the death of Bolivian citizens, some as victims of violence and others because they were deceived by the seductive talk of foreign agents.

22. Furthermore, the sterility and futility of such methods is obvious. Bolivia has a democracy which, without being perfect, ensures respect for human dignity, guarantees freedom of expression, and establishes the people's vote as the source of political power. In recent years, moreover, substantial reforms have been initiated, giving the people control over their own destinies, allowing a fair distribution of internal income and enabling the country's wealth to be exploited in the national interest and for the common good. This reality cannot be destroyed either by scheming guerrillas, by urban terrorism or by the preaching of hatred and anarchy.

23. In concluding this statement I should not wish to leave an impression of scepticism. I believe that it is everyone's duty to strengthen our will to act and to work unceasingly for the ideals that inspire and motivate the United Nations. It has been suggested recently that the time has come to revise the Charter, perhaps with the idea that the years that have passed since the San Francisco Conference have brought fundamental changes in the international order. This is not a crisis of principles, however, but rather one of action. It is clear that the Charter sums up the aspirations that history and civilization have succeeded in defining and formulating for the welfare of man and the progress of peoples. All that is lacking is the will to live in peace and freedom, to practice tolerance, to uphold justice and to respect the worth of the human person.

24. Bolivia believes in these principles and is convinced that, through them, understanding and co-operation among nations will become a reality filled with promise.

25. U MAUNG LWIN (Burma): It is my privilege to extend to you, Madam President, the cordial and sincere congratulations of the delegation of Burma, and my own personally, on your election as President of the General Assembly of the United Nations at its twenty-fourth session. The delegation of Burma is confident that your wide experience in the affairs of the international community, and the special perspective which you will doubtless bring to bear on the problems that lie ahead of the General Assembly, will be instrumental in guiding it along constructive channels so that the deliberations at this year's session will prove to be a positive step forward in the true interests of international harmony and international co-operation.

26. I should also like to take this opportunity to express our sense of bereavement on the passing-away of Dr. Emilio Arenales of Guatemala, who gave his distinguished services to the General Assembly as President of the twenty-third session.

27. We are assembled here at a time when the patterns of relationship between individuals as well as groups of nations, and within the groups themselves, are undergoing significant changes, and the General Assembly mirrors today the many moods of the world community. The tendency of the major Powers, in recent years, to avoid direct confrontation with each other and to have recourse to negotiation instead is a welcome development. However, even when the policies of the major Powers complement rather than confront each other, it would be well to remember that there are, nevertheless, other confrontations between peoples struggling for their political, economic and social independence against the forces of neo-colonialism and of various forms of foreign domination. Neo-colonialism frequently resorts to power politics, subversive activities and interference in the internal affairs of other nations, thereby violating the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and endangering the political and economic independence, as well as the territorial integrity, of many independent nations. In the opinion of my delegation, small but independent-minded states exposed to these dangers would find a refuge and a remedy in the realization of the need to reform and sometimes even to revolutionize the social systems and structures inherited from their colonial past which provided opportunities for advancement only for the restricted few while neglecting the rights of the vast majority.

28. Political, economic and social structural changes which would ensure the rights and safeguard the interests of the vast majority of their peoples are necessary in order to establish a sound national basis for unity, stability, peace and progress. Our own experience in Burma, where we have made far-reaching changes, is that they have facilitated the establishment of a political and social system best suited to our own deep-rooted culture and long-standing traditions, customs and mores. There are still many parts of the world where national difficulties invite external transgression. Indeed, my delegation has been led into thinking aloud on this matter because, like other delegations assembled from Asia, we are well aware of the agony attendant, in some of the countries in our part of the world, on situations occasionally beset with unseen protagonists and almost always with unresolved national issues.

29. I wish to refer briefly to the developments regarding Viet-Nam. We welcome the current peace talks, and are hopeful that they will pave the way to a future of their own choosing for the Viet-Nameese people, free from all external interference. However, after a year of these talks hardly any progress seems to have been achieved. Meanwhile untold suffering and unbearable trials and tribulations have become almost a normal state of affairs for our fellow Asians in Viet-Nam, both in the north and in the south. The delegation of Burma considers it immoral to persist in taking adamant stands and holding to stubborn attitudes while innocent citizens, including children, women and the aged, are being subjected to indiscriminate bombing and brutal shelling. We honestly believe that a good part of the

responsibility lies with the great Powers involved in the affairs of these countries.

30. In the Kingdom of Laos, our neighbouring State, there have been disquieting reports of more outside interventions and bigger military operations. This has to be stopped before the situation becomes worse. I should like to quote our Head of State, General Ne Win, who, in welcoming His Majesty the King of Laos to Rangoon in 1963, stated:

“Unfortunately, ours is a world in which opposing power-blocs still exist, and newly independent underdeveloped countries are often affected by conflicts between such power-blocs, much to their detriment. The Union of Burma has all along tried her best to steer clear of such conflicts and to maintain and develop friendly relations with all countries.”

31. On behalf of my Government I hereby reiterate what our Head of State said some six years ago: we shall steer clear of conflicts between power blocs and shall maintain and develop friendly relations with all countries.

32. If I may recapitulate post-war power politics: in the immediate aftermath of World War II, the world lay prostrate at the feet of victorious Powers. In their erroneous concept of security through building military blocs they sought client States and the world was virtually divided into two big camps. The bipolarization process went on at an accelerated pace and small States found themselves at the mercy of the super-Powers.

33. Only the independent-minded and the self-reliant refused to yield and in spite of all difficulties struggled to maintain their independent status. The policy of non-alignment, once held in some quarters to be synonymous with immorality, now has proved to be correct. By strictly following the non-alignment policy, Burma has contributed towards upholding the principles of the United Nations.

34. We are now in the age of polycentrism. Super-Powers, in spite of their immense strength and power, find themselves helpless in providing solutions to problems in which they are directly or indirectly involved. They find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to extricate themselves from the morass they are in. They have, for example, found it very difficult to get out of Viet-Nam. If there is one supreme lesson to be learnt from a generation of post-war politics it is that interference in the affairs of other nations is detrimental to peace-keeping, and also to peace-building, if you will, in this troubled world. There is ample evidence that it is easier to get in than out of a politico-military involvement.

35. I have dwelt at some length on the relationship between major Powers and the rest of the world—and for good reason. Even when we are faced with the most challenging problems, problems that have so far defied all solution, there are at present some discordant voices, impervious to current international realities, calling for more interference and intervention on the part of certain big Powers in the affairs of small countries.

36. Regarding the Middle East situation, which has disturbed us profoundly by its persistent violence and bitter

strife, we sincerely hope that the United Nations and Powers primarily concerned will continue in their efforts to avert the eruption of another devastating conflict. The delegation of Burma, like a great many other delegations, considers that the basis for a peaceful settlement has been established in resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967, adopted unanimously by the Security Council. Even if the implementation of the provisions of the resolution has so far proved difficult, the delegation of Burma would like to think that the parties to the conflict are not unaware of the need for reaching an early settlement in the interest of each and every nation in the area, or of the fact that the bitterness of the continuing conflict ensures that any advantage accruing from military action will only be of a temporary nature.

37. I should like to refer here to the subject of disarmament with which the issues of war and peace in the world today are closely linked. We consider that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons [*resolution 2373 (XXII)*] is only one side of the coin of nuclear disarmament, and to preserve the peace of the world it is not sufficient merely to ensure that those nations at present without a nuclear capability should never acquire that capability. It would be infinitely more meaningful if today's nuclear-weapon Powers, as a positive action towards dismantling their own nuclear arsenals, took at least the essential first step of limiting their nuclear weaponry. The world has been looking forward expectantly to the day when the United States and the Soviet Union will commence their bilateral discussion on the limitation and reduction of strategic nuclear weapons. It is hoped that agreement will also be reached on the banning of underground nuclear tests, and that a comprehensive test ban will put an end to the trend towards sophistication in nuclear weapons.

38. The delegation of Burma is hopeful, therefore, like other delegations assembled here, that the two major nuclear-weapon Powers will renew their initial impetus towards bilateral discussions and assert sufficient political will to ensure that those discussions will be fruitful. With your permission, Madam President, I should like to quote here from the address made by the Head of State of the Union of Burma in Moscow in 1965:

“... No nation can feel at peace with itself nor with the world unless general and complete disarmament becomes a reality. To those nations who have nuclear potential as to those who have nuclear capability, it must be obvious, as it is to us here in this historic city of Moscow which has witnessed the signature of the partial nuclear test ban Treaty, that nuclear capability, if it decreases the areas of international understanding and heightens international anxiety, is in the end futile and self-defeating.”

39. On the question of the preservation of the sea-bed and ocean floor beyond the limits of national jurisdiction for peaceful purposes exclusively, the delegation of Burma reiterates its view that it is essential that the armaments race should not be further extended to any new sphere or element. Given the pace of modern technological development it is extremely urgent that agreement be reached which will preclude activities of a military nature from the sea-bed and ocean floor. A parallel need, and an almost

equally urgent one if the advances of science and technology in the field are not to be utilized for the benefit of a small group of countries but for all nations, is the successful formulation of principles which will regulate the exploitation of the resources of the sea-bed and the ocean floor in the interest of all mankind. All nations, including the developing countries which do not yet have the technical competence to undertake exploitative activity, should share in the benefits derived from the exploitation of the resources of the sea-bed and the ocean floor beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

40. I should like to take this opportunity to compliment the Secretary-General on his report entitled *Chemical and Bacteriological (Biological) Weapons and the Effects of their Possible Use*.³ The prospect of chemical and biological warfare has not claimed the same attention, nor produced the same degree of fear and horror, as has the prospect of nuclear warfare, but its more insidious nature, its easier production and utilization, and the possibility of its longer-lasting effects, all make it a prime subject for a co-ordinated effort at international control. It is essential, as the Secretary-General has urged, "to make a clear affirmation that the prohibition contained in the Geneva Protocol" of 1925 "applies to the use in war of all chemical, bacteriological and biological agents (including tear-gas and other harassing agents), which now exist or which may be developed in the future".⁴

41. In the effort to maintain intact the fragile fabric of international peace, one of the essentials, without which the international community labours under a severe handicap, is universality of membership in the United Nations and the specialized agencies. The effectiveness of the United Nations as an instrument of international peace could be enhanced, and the goodwill and co-operation of all nations could be better assured, if there were universality of membership. However, till today the People's Republic of China, the world's most populous nation, continues to be excluded from its rightful seat among the membership of the United Nations. The delegation of Burma wishes to reiterate its view that discussions of world problems would be more realistic if the People's Republic of China were to be a party to them as a Member of the United Nations.

42. The delegation of Burma regrets that much time must necessarily be spent at each session of the General Assembly considering ways to combat the twin evils of colonialism and racial discrimination. However anachronistic those practices may appear to be, they nevertheless still persist and even flourish in certain parts of the world. The part played by the Republic of South Africa in nurturing colonialism and racialism in southern Africa is a sorry one, and concerning Namibia, particularly, South Africa's actions are especially disturbing, since it continues to challenge and flout openly the authority of the United Nations itself. The people of Namibia continue to be deprived of their right to self-determination and independence, and, instead, find themselves incorporated more and more into the system of *apartheid*. It is essential, therefore, that the Republic of South Africa be effectively deterred from the course it is now taking over Namibia.

³ United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.69.I.24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.xii, para. 2.

43. That there should be not merely a prevalence but an expansion of the policy of racial discrimination in southern Africa is a matter of increasing concern to the great majority of the nations of the world, which believe in the essential worth and dignity of the human person. It is a disquieting thought that the expansion of racist policies in the area can only result in the most violent racial conflict, and that the conflict will only be resolved in brutality and tragedy. In such a situation the delegation of Burma considers that, if further tragedy is to be avoided, developments in southern Africa call for timely action on the part of the permanent members of the Security Council.

44. I should like, at this point, to refer to the problems of economic development, for the solution of which both national and international effort and resources have been applied increasingly within recent times. The First United Nations Development Decade launched by the General Assembly in 1961 is rapidly coming to a close. Yet the pace of economic and social progress in the developing countries has been greatly disappointing, and it is apparent that neither of the two goals set by the General Assembly is likely to be as fully achieved as had been envisaged. The disappointment concerning the First Development Decade has been ascribed mainly to the lack of an international strategy, and an attempt has been made to remedy this lack for the Second Development Decade.

45. The delegation of Burma is, however, of the view that, the availability or lack of such a development strategy notwithstanding, the development goals of the international community cannot be achieved without the requisite political will on the part of both developed and developing countries. The delegation of Burma holds firmly to the view that the most important part of the strategy that may be formulated should be the creation of a two-way political will as between developing and developed countries. I should like to present the thought that the most effective way of helping to create the requisite political will among the developed countries would be to demonstrate beyond any doubt the sincerity and intensity of the desire of the developing countries to place primary reliance on their own strength and resources. The developed nations, for their part, should expect no political or material returns from the developing countries for the assistance and co-operation which they may be prepared to extend to help achieve the objectives of the Second Development Decade.

46. Some representatives have commented, both at the previous session and at this session of the Assembly, on the prevalence of discriminatory practices in international trade. We believe such practices to be very detrimental to world trade in general, and to the developing countries in particular, and that it is essential to do away with such discrimination and restrictions in order to close the gap between the developed and the developing countries. Some developing countries are still dependent upon a single-crop economy, and since it takes a considerable time to diversify their economy, the developed countries could help close that gap by doing away with all trade discrimination during this process of diversification. Although aid could be of some help, we believe that trade without discrimination could be of immense value in the process of development.

47. The United Nations will complete the twenty-fifth year of its existence next year. If any special sanctity should be attached to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Organization, it should perhaps be because it serves to signal the hour when Member nations may wish to pause, in the words of the Secretary-General, for a

“... reflection and stock-taking in the middle of our long pilgrimage for consolidation of the progress already made by our Organization and, finally, for renewed dedication of the ideals we set out to attain twenty-five years ago at San Francisco”.⁵

⁵ From the statement made by the Secretary-General at the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the United Nations.

48. With increasing age some of the lustre may have been lost from the ideals that were set at San Francisco, but it is the view of the delegation of Burma that we should neither despair at this loss nor yet cynically accept, in the name of realism, some of the failures attendant on the activities of the Organization. A renewed determination by all nations to practise more consistently the principles enshrined in the Charter would surely be the most effective rededication by the membership to the ideals set out at San Francisco.

49. The PRESIDENT: May I take this opportunity to thank the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Bolivia and Burma for the compliments which they have paid me.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.