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*President:* Mr. Leopoldo BENITES (Ecuador).

AGENDA ITEM 25

**Strengthening of the role of the United Nations with regard to the maintenance and consolidation of international peace and security, the development of co-operation among all nations and the promotion of the rules of international law in relations between States: report of the Secretary-General (*continued*)**

1. Mr. NUR ELMI (Somalia): The people of the Somali Democratic Republic have very special relations with the United Nations. The Trusteeship Agreement for Somalia, called for by the General Assembly in section B of resolution 289 A (IV) and adopted almost a quarter of a century ago, had truly reflected the action of the Organization, which faithfully applied the principles of the Charter in the interest, and for the welfare, of my people. Mindful of this fact, we in the Somali Democratic Republic believe in the practical value of the United Nations. My delegation, therefore, attaches great importance to the item under discussion.

2. However, we realize that ideas about the role of the United Nations in international affairs and about its future development vary according to one's point of view. High ideals and noble principles have been incorporated in the United Nations Charter, but some of us here, perhaps many, believe that, under the cloak of that historic document, some of the major Powers look upon the United Nations primarily as a "big-Power club". This belief is reinforced by the fact that the existence of strong political differences, together with the provision of the Charter which enables the permanent members of the Security Council to veto a draft resolution, ensures a deadlock on peace-keeping issues, which may have tragic consequences for world peace and security. The last such deadlock in the Security Council took place five months ago,<sup>1</sup> when the United States vetoed a draft resolution which had gained the support of all the other members of the Council and which would have brought some tangible

<sup>1</sup> See *Official Records of the Security Council, Twenty-eighth year, 1735th meeting.*

progress in the complex problem of the Middle East. The consequences were the tragic developments which the world witnessed three months later.

3. My delegation believes that there will have to be some development which would compensate for the state of deadlock in the Security Council caused by the veto power in that body, or else the Organization will become another failure in the attempts to create an international authority in the service and in the cause of peace. That development could be the shifting of influence from the Security Council—a 15-member organ hamstrung by the veto system—to the General Assembly, an open parliament of 135 sovereign States of all sizes, all degrees of wealth and various degrees of political commitment which range from hard-and-fast bloc membership to non-alignment.

4. It is the view of my delegation that the General Assembly should secure for itself some kind of authority in order to formulate peace-keeping methods whenever the Security Council is unable to act because of the veto deadlock and international peace and security are threatened. The legality of this particular question, which I am sure the Security Council considers its prerogative, should be explored, even if that means amending the Charter. It will be recalled that as far back as November 1949, the General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled "Essentials of peace", in which it called upon the five permanent members of the Security Council:

"To broaden progressively their co-operation and to exercise restraint in the use of the veto in order to make the Security Council a more effective instrument for maintaining peace" [*resolution 290 (IV)*].

5. It is important that progress should be made in finding solutions to the problems of peace-keeping operations and of improving the techniques for the pacific settlement of disputes. Keeping the peace is what the United Nations was created to do, and more positive efforts towards this objective are required. I believe that the United Nations should establish an interim formula for the financing of peace-keeping operations until a more comprehensive arrangement can be worked out. The very usefulness of peace-keeping operations depends on their reliability. As things stand today, these operations have to depend on *ad hoc* improvisations, as we have witnessed recently in the Middle East crisis. However, peace-keeping operations must be thought of, not as an end in themselves, but as interim measures to allow for the application of procedures for final settlements.

6. In the view of my delegation, the strength of the United Nations does not lie in the wealth and military power of its

Members but rather in the quality of the ideas they can contribute to the solution of world problems and in the degree of material and moral force they can provide for the implementation of those ideas.

7. The overwhelming majority of the Member States of our Organization are from the developing countries, which have a special interest in ensuring that the United Nations develop its capacity as an active and effective instrument for world peace. My delegation has stated on many occasions that it is time for the United Nations to give the developing countries a greater voice and that such a change could best be made by abolishing or limiting the veto system of the major Powers. The developing countries do not depend on armaments, nuclear or otherwise, for their security. They depend on the provisions of the Charter of this Organization and, therefore, they maintain that the authority of the Charter, which is the source of security of all nations—large and small—should not be undermined.

8. From an African point of view the major international political issues today are the conflict in the Middle East, the continued presence of colonialism and the despicable practices of *apartheid* and racial discrimination in Africa.

9. No other issues have defined so clearly the differences in point of view between the Western group in the United Nations on the one hand, and the African and other non-aligned and socialist countries on the other as the issues of colonialism, racism and *apartheid* have done. For a decade and more we have been urging our Western friends in this Organization to help us liberate the parts of our continent still under oppressive colonial rule. Unfortunately, they have not been responsive to our appeals. It is clear to all of us that there is a danger of racial conflagration in southern Africa which endangers international peace and security in the neglected African continent. It is precisely because of this situation that my delegation would have preferred to see reflected in the draft resolution now before us [A/L.713] the following paragraph:

“Reaffirms that all peoples have the right to self-determination and independence and that the subjection of peoples to foreign domination constitutes a serious impediment to the maintenance of international peace and security and the development of peaceful relations among nations.”

However, this is not introduced as a formal amendment to the draft resolution which our friends of the delegation of Romania have been working on, and we will not insist on its inclusion in that draft resolution.

10. The problem of the Middle East, the desperate struggle of the African people against the last pockets of colonialism, *apartheid* and racism, and many other unhappy world situations, all cast ominous shadows on the work of the United Nations. But despite such handicaps, the work of the Organization has gone forward—admittedly slowly and unspectacularly—but the important fact is that it continues to move forward.

11. I should like to say, however, that the success of the United Nations is dependent entirely on the amount of moral and material support which its Members are willing

to give it. Its weakness or strength is simply a reflection of the attitude of its Members, particularly the major Powers. The Organization is, of necessity, as imperfect as any human institution. It cannot take on a mystical life of its own apart from the legitimate or illegitimate wishes of its membership. What it can and must do is continue to lead the world away from the old notions of power, zones of influence, and racial superiority. These must be replaced in this nuclear age by the acceptance of the new code of international morality which is provided both explicitly and implicitly by the United Nations Charter.

12. Mr. HICKS (Canada): In his statement in the general debate on 25 September 1973 the Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada touched on a number of themes which are relevant to this present debate on the strengthening of the role of the United Nations. He posed a basic question which underlies this debate:

“The United Nations is becoming universal—is it becoming more effective as an instrument for the attainment of the hopes and aspirations of mankind?” [2126th meeting, para. 50.]

He went on:

“Since last we met here one of the architects of this Organization, the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, died in Canada. In those bright, hopeful days when he and others were engaged in preparing for the birth of the United Nations, Mr. Pearson expressed his fear that when the unifying pressures of world war had subsided, ‘nationalist pride and prejudice would become strong again—and the narrow concept of the national interest prevail’. This judgement on the future was all too quickly proven accurate. Yet as conscious of its imperfections as any man, Mr. Pearson remained convinced that the United Nations was indispensable for even the most slow and painful march away from mass violence and poverty.” [Ibid., para. 51.]

13. Canada continues to believe that the United Nations remains indispensable as a framework within which men of good will can live and work together towards the day when the rule of law will replace the rule of force in international relations. The initiative taken by the Romanian delegation last year in requesting the inclusion of the agenda item we are now discussing<sup>2</sup> has served as a useful reminder that it is a responsibility of Members to try to strengthen that role, in a multitude of ways, through maximum utilization of the structures provided by the United Nations and its various components and agencies.

14. In our reply to the Secretary-General in response to his request for comments of Governments under the terms of resolution 2925 (XXVII), Canada laid particular stress on the thought that the effectiveness of the United Nations depends not so much on exhortatory appeals or on efforts to improve its procedural methods as on the political will of its Members. We stated in our reply:

“That political will, the essence of any strengthening of the United Nations, has to be translated into persistent

<sup>2</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-seventh Session, Annexes*, agenda item 24, document A/8792.

and conscientious application to the day-to-day and year-to-year task of concentrating on the many specific issues which face the world community over many fields.” [A/9128, p. 4.]

15. Although there have been exceptions to this characterization, we are of the view that, by and large, a declaratory or exhortatory approach to the problems facing the Organization and its Member States has not yielded useful results for the United Nations. Indeed, such an approach has often contributed to a public image that the United Nations conceals its accomplishments under a flood of words and frustratingly repetitive pronouncements. Similarly, periodic efforts to reform and streamline the procedures and organization of the United Nations can produce useful results, but their impact is necessarily limited. Procedural reforms, however valuable, cannot be pursued very far before they encounter political and substantive difficulties which defy purely procedural solutions. It was in that perspective that Canada viewed the suggestions which were made last year regarding the review of the Charter. We took the position that the United Nations could be made more dynamic without rewriting the Charter, and that its effectiveness and vitality depended not so much on changing the basic structure of the Organization as on the political resolve of its Members to fulfil the obligations which each had already assumed in subscribing to the provisions of the Charter.

16. Each session of the General Assembly provides a rough image of the needs and priorities of Member States, and the general debate which serves as a prelude to our more detailed work in the seven main Committees provides a further opportunity for each of us to sharpen the focus of our respective and collective interests and concerns.

17. We have said that we believe that the political resolve of Members of the United Nations is the most important aspect of improving the effectiveness of the United Nations. We could, for example, attempt to improve our machinery and rules of procedure and give consideration to adopting rules that would limit the length of speeches, avoid repetitiveness and save time by a resort to formal processes, but these would not work unless Members were themselves resolved to make them work. In the view of my delegation, the image and effectiveness of the United Nations would be improved if we sought to avoid unduly repetitive debates from year to year on issues where no or very few new facts had become available and when virtually no new and progressive action could result. But this and similar objects may best be accomplished by changes in the political will, or political resolve, or even the political restraint, of Members rather than by tampering with the machinery of the United Nations or redrawing the rules of procedure.

18. The draft resolution before us [A/L.713] seeks to address itself to a wide range of these interests and concerns. My delegation can readily endorse the objectives which the sponsors have in mind, and we appreciate their readiness to consult widely and respond to the views of others. We are prepared to support the draft resolution, recognizing the difficulties inherent in an effort of this kind to reduce a subject so extensive and wide-ranging to the compass of a single resolution. For that reason many provisions of the draft resolution are cast in general language and may be wanting in the precision and concreteness that we normally

look for. However, it is clear that the broad formulations of principle are not intended to be taken as exhaustive or all-inclusive nor can they be considered as affecting the provisions of the Charter and other basic documents, such as the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations [resolution 2625 (XXV)], which speak to some of the same issues.

19. There are clear signs that the United Nations is strengthening itself to deal more authoritatively through the Security Council with matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. The establishment of the United Nations Emergency Force under the authority of Security Council resolution 340 (1973), a force in which my own country is participating, is further tangible evidence of this.

20. At the same time, we live in a world and at a time in which an increasing number of problems can be solved only on a global basis: the protection of the environment, the issue of population, problems of poverty, development and the uses of the earth's resources, to mention only a few.

21. The need for an effective global organization grows and becomes more apparent every year. Imperfect though it may be, the United Nations is the only agency that men and nations have yet devised that can perform this much-needed role and provide the machinery for co-operation between men and nations that is essential if man is to continue to progress and if men are to live in harmony one with another.

22. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, that Members of the United Nations do all in their power to make the United Nations and its various organs and agencies as effective as possible in the performance of their functions and the achievement of the objectives set forth in the Charter.

23. If this draft resolution can assist, even in a modest way, in our common search for practical and workable solutions to the many issues facing us, it will have served its purpose and advanced our cause, even if only a little.

*Mr. Driss (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

24. Mr. SAITO (Japan): The strengthening of the United Nations in the present-day world is a long-standing policy of the Government of Japan which it pursues with vigour and sincerity both within and outside the United Nations. As a nation which has experienced the scourge of war, the people of Japan have resolved to work towards the construction of a world where peace in the place of war, prosperity in the place of misery, will prevail.

25. The Constitution of Japan, promulgated after the war that inflicted devastation upon the entire nation, is a testimony to this resolve of the Japanese people never again to be visited by the horrors of war. Article 9 of the Constitution, in particular, provides:

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.”

26. Indeed, as the Foreign Minister of Japan, Mr. Ohira, stated in his address to the General Assembly at the beginning of the present session last September, the Japanese people are convinced that

“there can be no peace [for Japan] without peace for the world, and no prosperity [for Japan] without prosperity for the world.” [2127th meeting, para. 101.]

It is against this background that Japan has been and continues to be a dedicated and staunch supporter of the United Nations as the world Organization established for promoting international co-operation and maintaining international peace.

27. My delegation trusts that the item now before us, which was proposed as a new item last year by the delegation of Romania,<sup>3</sup> has the same aim as the one I have just described, and in that spirit, my delegation welcomes its constructive objective and spirit.

28. Here, I should like to touch briefly upon the goal to which our efforts should be directed. It is the view of my delegation that if we are as serious as we should be about strengthening the United Nations so that it may be able fully and effectively to carry out the functions and the responsibilities entrusted to it by the world community, it is of the utmost importance that we should be open-minded and should not allow preconceived ideas to hem in our efforts to bring about possible improvements. The scope of our examination in search for ways and means to enhance the functions and effectiveness of the Organization should be sufficiently comprehensive taking into account all major aspects of the problems involved.

29. In this connexion, I should like to refer to the introduction to the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization for this year. After referring to some promising new directions and forms of United Nations activities which have been developing, our esteemed Secretary-General had this to say:

“This promise . . . can only properly be fulfilled if there is a widespread willingness to make a realistic assessment of the Organization’s capacity and potential, and to decide on constructive, contemporary and imaginative ways in which it can be used to meet the present and future problems which we face.” [A/9001/Add.1, p. 1.]

My delegation fully shares this view. If there are potential possibilities in the present mechanism of the Organization which have not been fully utilized, as I believe there are in plenty, Member States should make every effort to make full use of them. A study in this direction will be a most welcome undertaking. The scope of the problem extends even further. In view of the fundamental changes that have taken place in the world community in the last quarter of a century, we should not be reluctant to face the possibility of reviewing the Charter, if need be, in order to effect such adjustments in the Organization as are both necessary and inevitable if the United Nations is to cope effectively with present and future problems.

<sup>3</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-seventh Session, Plenary Meetings, 2058th meeting, para. 41.

30. It is with this deeply-felt conviction on the part of Japan that my delegation has been advocating, for the last several years since the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the need for us Members of the United Nations to undertake a comprehensive review and examination of how to strengthen the functions of the United Nations, and in particular a review of the Charter of the Organization.

31. As for the initiative taken by the delegation of Romania regarding the strengthening of the role of the United Nations, my delegation is prepared to give its full support to it on the understanding that it forms an integral part of our common effort towards a comprehensive consideration of all the various possibilities open to us for strengthening this all-important world Organization in the sense that I have just described.

32. I should like to conclude my brief statement by quoting from the address of Mr. Ohira before this Assembly, in which he stressed to all the members assembled in this hall the need to face squarely the problem of how to strengthen the United Nations in the best interests of the world community as a whole and with a view to the concerted action of all Member States in that direction. He said:

“Now that the United Nations is approaching its thirtieth anniversary, I should like to propose that each Member State engage in soul-searching, free from any preconceived ideas, and reflect on the role to be played by the United Nations in this new era. We can share the benefits of our wisdom and rally our forces together in the common effort to open up a new vista for the future of the Organization.” [2127th meeting, para. 63.]

33. Sir Donald MAITLAND (United Kingdom): The delegation of Romania has performed an invaluable service. It has confronted us with a number of unpalatable truths. It has invited us to consider strengthening the role of the United Nations in regard to the central purpose for which this Organization was established. It has invited us to consider how far we have achieved the purposes of the United Nations as set out in Article 1 of our Charter. Have we maintained international peace and security? How far have friendly relations been developed between nations? How far does the international community co-operate in solving international problems? Can we yet say that the United Nations is a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of our common ends?

34. Few among us would maintain that the purposes of the founding fathers have been adequately fulfilled. That, no doubt, is why the originators of this item have felt it necessary to include it in the agenda of the General Assembly.

35. My Government believes that the effectiveness of the United Nations depends more on the collective will of its Member States than upon institutional reform. We have not yet exploited to the full the opportunities provided by the Charter. What is at issue here is not so much a matter of mechanics as of attitudes. The Secretary-General, in the admirable introduction to his report on the work of the United Nations this year, suggested that it was not enough

for States to examine the United Nations with care and imagination. He said:

“... they must also ask themselves whether their own attitudes, their assumptions, their goals and their machinery are adequate or appropriate for our times.”  
[A/9001/Add.1, p. 2.]

36. A similar point was made in starker terms by the Foreign Minister of Singapore in his intervention in the General Assembly debate during the twenty-seventh session<sup>4</sup> when he made the charge that the United Nations had tended to become less and less an Organization for reconciliation and more and more an arena for staging contests.

37. If one accepts the thesis that we are dealing with a matter of attitudes, then, as I am sure the originators of this item recognize, it is by no means easy to bring the differing views of governments into proper focus. For this reason, and in order to contribute constructively to this debate, I should like to touch on two matters to which it might be profitable to direct our attention if the expectations of the peoples represented in this Organization are not to be frustrated.

38. I spoke a moment ago of the need to make the fullest use of the opportunities already provided by the Charter. One sphere in which I believe this has not happened is the peaceful settlement of disputes. My delegation believes that more active use could and should be made of the machinery and possibilities provided in the Charter for preventing conflicts and for encouraging peaceful settlements.

39. In 1965 the United Kingdom delegation asked that there should be included in the agenda of the twentieth session of the General Assembly an item entitled “Peaceful settlement of disputes”.<sup>5</sup> We felt then that the resources of the international community as a whole should be exploited in order to solve the underlying disputes which gave rise to tension and conflict. We suggested that this subject merited separate study not only to elaborate general principles but also to consider how our methods could be improved. For various reasons, the discussion of this item was adjourned. But we remain convinced that progress in this field is important. We were therefore especially glad to note that this concept has been taken up in operative paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/L.713, submitted by the originators of the item and a number of other sponsors.

40. The other sphere on which I suggest we might concentrate our attention is the resolutions of the Assembly and of other United Nations organs. The General Assembly adopts many resolutions every year. We are bound to ask ourselves

what is the practical value of the majority of these resolutions. These Assembly resolutions and, similarly, resolutions of the Security Council other than decisions under Chapter VII are not, of course, mandatory; nor is there any obligation under the Charter to “implement” them—to use the professional jargon. I should perhaps make it quite clear, in connexion with operative paragraph 7 of draft resolution A/L.713, that that is the view of my Government.

41. We regard resolutions adopted by the General Assembly as having a recommendatory character. In certain circumstances such recommendatory resolutions can be of real value. I have in mind in particular many of the resolutions passed when we were celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of this Organization. A real effort was made then to achieve a broad area of agreement or consensus on many issues. At the same time, we are entitled to question the value of resolutions which, as sometimes happens, are supported more for extraneous considerations than for their own merits.

42. Other resolutions are passed without any effort being made to take into account the views of delegations who may well be in a numerical minority but whose consent and co-operation are essential if any practical result is to follow. My delegation believes that this shortcoming can best be remedied by means of more active and effective consultation among Member States in the preparation of draft resolutions. This is one way in which we could replace confrontation with partnership, a process which is essential if we are to exploit to the full the universality of the United Nations. I am glad to see, from operative paragraph 5 of draft resolution A/L.713, that the sponsors have this question in mind.

43. In concentrating on these two issues, I do not wish to imply that there are not other aspects of the problem which merit study. There are many. But, as I have suggested, we should search for the fundamental cause of our disappointments in the attitudes of Member States. It follows from this that our work here will be made more effective, not so much by adoption of principles, as in the improvement of the spirit in which individual delegations approach the wide variety of subjects dealt with in the United Nations.

44. My delegation believes that the originators of this item and the sponsors of draft resolution A/L.713 have brought before us issues which cannot be ignored by anyone who believes in the sovereign importance of the role of the United Nations. The draft resolution highlights, among other things, the two particular questions to which my delegation attaches importance. We for our part will support the draft resolution when the time comes to vote on it.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Plenary Meetings, 2060th meeting.

<sup>5</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twentieth Session, Annexes*, agenda item 99, document A/5964.

*The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.*