



General Assembly

PROVISIONAL

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ENGLISH

Forty-second session

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FIRST MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 15 September 1987, at 3 p.m.

President:

Mr. CHOUDHURY
(Temporary President)

(Bangladesh)

later:

Mr. FLORIN
(President)

(German Democratic Republic)

- Opening of the forty-second session by the Temporary President, Chairman of the delegation of Bangladesh
- Minute of silent prayer or meditation
- Address by the Temporary President
- Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations
- Credentials of representatives to the forty-second session of the General Assembly:
 - (a) appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee
- Election of the President of the General Assembly
- Address by Mr. Peter Florin, President of the General Assembly at its forty-second session
- Organization of work

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

ITEM 1 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

OPENING OF THE FORTY-SECOND SESSION BY THE TEMPORARY PRESIDENT, CHAIRMAN OF THE DELEGATION OF BANGLADESH

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT: I declare open the forty-second session of the General Assembly.

ITEM 2 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

MINUTE OF SILENT PRAYER OR MEDITATION

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT: Before calling on representatives to observe a minute of silent prayer or meditation in accordance with rule 62 of the rules of procedure, I propose that as we do so we also observe the International Day of Peace, on this third Tuesday of September, as proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/67 of 30 November 1981, to be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples.

Each year the International Day of Peace provides an opportunity to reflect upon a goal shared by people around the world: the goal of a secure and peaceful life. The attainment of peace clearly remains among the foremost challenges of our time. Our task in gathering here today is to face this challenge together, to seek common solutions to questions which can profoundly affect the conditions of life upon this planet. Difficult as this may be, we must recognize that we are not alone in this effort, for millions of people share with us their hope and trust, and their commitment to the realization of a better future.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

ADDRESS BY THE TEMPORARY PRESIDENT

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT: We are gathered here to debate, deliberate and decide, for the forty-second time, upon the crucial issues of the contemporary world. We do so within the structure of an Organization mandated for the purpose by the peoples of the world. To them - for we assemble at their command - we have a clear duty. I have not the slightest doubt that the forty-second session of the General Assembly will measure up to its responsibilities.

In my concluding remarks at the final meeting of the forty-first session of the General Assembly I attempted to sum up what I believe was the spirit and essence of that session. I shall not, therefore, repeat myself. All I shall say is that the forty-first session was confronted with a decent challenge, a serious, but not an overwhelming, source of worry. That in turn provoked a vigorous creative response. It is to be hoped that this will have energized our Organization and set it on the path to greater glory.

We must bear in mind that while the United Nations does not proscribe sovereignty it points to the deeper and greater commitments of mankind beyond those inspired by State structures. Pericles warned the citizens of Athens, "If you shrink from the labours of sovereignty, do not claim any of its honours". Likewise, we must not forsake the labours of global kinship, lest we be deprived of its benefits.

In my statement yesterday I expressed my appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General, and their respective staffs; it was well deserved. Their support to me has been spontaneous, active and enthusiastic. They represent a fine body of people, dedicated and devoted, and I have not the slightest hesitation in commending them to my successor.

(The Temporary President)

The tributes that have come my way, paid in public and in private, are not fully deserved; nevertheless, it was gratifying to receive that recognition. My services to the Organization were a small contribution my country, Bangladesh, made to a system to which it is so deeply committed.

ITEM 123 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (A/42/563)

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT: Before turning to the next item on our agenda, I should like, in keeping with the established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/42/563, which contains a letter addressed to me by the Secretary-General, in which he informs the Assembly that two Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I should like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

"A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years".

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

ITEM 3 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

CREDENTIALS OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FORTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY:
(a) APPOINTMENT OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT: Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly, at the beginning of each session, shall appoint, on the proposal of the President, a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

(The Temporary President)

Accordingly, it is proposed that, for the forty-second session, the Credentials Committee should consist of the following Member States: Argentina, Barbados, Cape Verde, China, the Federal Republic of Germany, Kenya, Singapore, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the United States of America.

May I take it that the States I have mentioned are hereby appointed members of the Credentials Committee?

It was so decided.

ITEM 4 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT: I now invite members of the General Assembly to proceed to the election of the President of the General Assembly at its forty-second session.

May I recall that, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 33/138, the President of the General Assembly at the forty-second session should be elected from an Eastern European State.

In this connection, I have been informed by the Chairman of the Group of Eastern European States that his Group has endorsed the candidacy of His Excellency Mr. Peter Florin of the German Democratic Republic for the presidency of the General Assembly.

Taking into account the provisions of paragraph 16 of annex VI to the rules of procedure, I therefore declare His Excellency Mr. Peter Florin of the German Democratic Republic elected President of the General Assembly at its forty-second session by acclamation.

I extend my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Peter Florin and I invite him to assume the presidency.

I request the Chief of Protocol to escort the President to the podium.

Mr. Florin took the Chair.

ADDRESS BY MR. PETER FLORIN, PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-SECOND SESSION

The PRESIDENT: Permit me to thank representatives for the confidence they have placed in me by electing me President of the General Assembly at its forty-second session. First and foremost, I regard this as an expression of esteem for my country, the German Democratic Republic, and its policy of peace and mutual understanding.

An important part of my life has been connected with the United Nations, and my conviction has been strengthened that the world Organization is unique. There is no alternative to it. All countries, large, medium and small, need it. The United Nations is the sole political organization of States that is universal, a forum for dialogue and concerted international action, which serves to find solutions to the fundamental issues of the present and the future.

From this place I wish to pay tribute and express appreciation to my distinguished predecessor in the presidency, Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh. With his wealth of experience and great diplomatic skill he has guided the General Assembly's work successfully at a difficult time. For that, we are indeed indebted to him.

(spoke in French)

I believe that I am speaking on behalf of all representatives when I convey my thanks to the Secretary-General of the Organization, Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, for his indefatigable and energetic commitment to the service of international peace and security. To all the words of gratitude we have heard about his activities, I should like to add my own best wishes for good health and energy. It is with great pleasure that I look forward to continuing our constructive and co-operative relationship.

(The President)

I should also like to take this opportunity to welcome very cordially the new Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs, Joseph Verner Reed, with whom we all - including myself as President of the General Assembly - will undoubtedly maintain relations of excellent co-operation.

At the same time let me assure representatives that, in all conscience and loyal to our Organization's Charter, I shall spare no effort to accomplish the performance of the very serious duties incumbent upon me as President of the General Assembly at its forty-second session.

(continued in Russian)

At this session some difficult and painstaking work lies ahead, because the international situation is complex and in a state of flux. Nevertheless, there is definite potential for political success in important areas. Let us make use of this in the best possible way. A change for the better, towards an easing of tension in international relations, is certainly feasible. It can be achieved through a joint act of political will on the part of responsible statesmen, marked by dialogue and a readiness for mutual understanding. Such a change is essential given the overwhelming burden of the global problems that face mankind and overshadow our future. According to statistics published by our Organization on 11 July 1987, here we are talking about the future of 5 billion persons.

The twentieth century is drawing to a close and its challenges are no longer merely national but have global scope. These challenges face the United Nations as well. There is a growing awareness of the interdependence of our world - an awareness of global problems that affect us all. I have in mind the following: the danger of human civilization being destroyed because of nuclear arms; the devastating consequences of the spiralling arms race for the socio-economic

(The President)

development of all countries; such burning world problems as underdevelopment, malnutrition and illiteracy; of equal importance, the squandering of resources and the threat to the environment; and, finally, the remarkable achievements of scientific and technological development in the areas of high technology and communication, which must be used for man's benefit.

(The President)

The people of the world expect from the present session recommendations and decisions that are conducive to the solution of problems. It is my hope that constructive activities on our part will lead to a convergence of positions and to agreement, or at best a consensus, on as many resolutions and decisions as possible. This concerns first and foremost the fundamental issues of preserving world peace and strengthening international security. As members know, Article 1 of the Charter is specific in calling upon us to take effective collective measures to that end.

It was no accident that at its thirty-sixth session the General Assembly decided to declare the opening day of its regular session International Day of Peace. I am sure that we all share the hope that 1986, the International Year of Peace, will be followed by only peaceful years.

It is encouraging to note that in significant documents adopted by important groups of States increasing attention is paid to similar problems and there is an observable tendency towards converging approaches to their solution. This holds true, for example, in the case of the statements made at the Eighth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, in Harare, the conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the countries members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in Reykjavik, and the meetings of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty States in Berlin.

The need to end the conventional and nuclear arms races is recognized as presenting a global problem. I have no doubt that our Organization will be able to assist in disentangling the knot of genuine and imaginary security interests that has kept going the arms race in all its aspects. Reduction of the nuclear threat to mankind is no longer a utopian dream. There is a clear possibility of achieving nuclear disarmament through an agreement on the elimination of United States and

(The President)

Soviet medium-range missiles. Here we can see what can be achieved when the nuclear Powers and the five permanent members of the Security Council, in particular the Soviet Union and the United States, act in accordance with their special responsibility. At the same time it should be pointed out that proposals and discussions on disarmament are no longer confined to a small group of States or a few experts; they have now become a public issue in the best sense of the term.

The arms race on earth must be halted and reversed. Such was the mandate of the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, in 1978. In view of this, would it be logical to extend the arms race into outer space?

Considerable hopes are placed in the conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons and efforts to bring about conventional disarmament. Certain sceptics describe disarmament negotiation as a Sisyphean task. A more apt comparison, however, would be with the 12 labours of the hero of Greek mythology, Heracles.

The International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, which has just concluded its work, demonstrated the timeliness of the formula "disarmament for development". Reduction of the overwhelming burden of military expenditures would release resources with which to tackle the global tasks that face us.

In other words, what we are addressing here is the need to create the conditions for lasting and comprehensive international security in the spirit of the Charter and in accordance with the realities of the nuclear age. More trust and disarmament and greater common security are the means by which to bring this about. I hope that there will be a serious, thorough exchange of views on these

(The President)

matters as a result of which joint conclusions will be formulated and the necessary steps outlined.

The General Assembly would be performing a valuable service for mankind if at this session it were to adopt unanimously the draft declaration on the enhancement of the effectiveness of the principle of non-use of force in international relations. This document, which contains fundamental provisions on peaceful relations between States, the inalienable right of every nation freely to choose its own social system, the indivisibility of peace, security and fundamental freedoms and economic and social development, testifies to the possibility of mutual understanding even in difficult international situations provided that all parties are guided by common sense and realism and have the necessary political will.

As a citizen of a European country I venture to refer to European experience. The process of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) is, in my opinion, evidence of the possibility of solving diverse problems no matter how difficult they may appear. This process is a new phenomenon, based on the principles in the United Nations Charter, according to which countries with different social systems, countries members of different military coalitions and economic groupings and neutral and non-aligned States are basing their relations on an agreed code of principles of peaceful coexistence. The CSCE process is and will continue to be an element of international relations which inspires hope and makes for peace on earth.

(The President)

The range of possibilities that exist for reaching an understanding was demonstrated only recently by the joint communiqué agreed on during the visit of the Head of State of the German Democratic Republic to the neighbouring Federal Republic of Germany.

To bring about peace on earth it is necessary to curb the conflicts that threaten the existence of mankind. Not only have those conflicts taken a heavy toll on the parties involved, but there is a risk that they will get out of control and even plunge the world into catastrophe.

Clearly, the causes of the conflicts are diverse. Their roots cannot necessarily be sought in the East-West confrontation; that would narrow the possibility of resolving them. The task of the General Assembly at this forty-second session should rather be to promote and assist all efforts to resolve international conflicts through negotiation, dialogue, a joint search for solutions and the adoption of essential decisions. Chapters VI and VII of the Charter offer a full range of possibilities for action. There are some that we have not yet managed to utilize. This does not necessarily prove that they are lacking in effectiveness.

There is a growing awareness of the dangers inherent in the focuses of conflict. There is a growing aspiration on the part of long-suffering peoples to end them, whether they be in South-East Asia, southern Africa, the Middle East or Central America.

Realistic proposals have been put forward, with regard to all these conflicts, proposals that take due account of the interests of the parties involved and which would, if acted upon, eliminate the danger. I am referring in particular to the negotiations on the situation around Afghanistan, or the recent proposals for the convening of a Middle East peace conference, which would not be a tribunal for

(The President)

passing judgement on any particular State or people. I have in mind the recent peace plan for Central America and the Contadora process, and further efforts to reach an understanding on the question of Cyprus. Of exceptional importance are the steps taken recently, with the active participation of the Security Council, to put an end to the tragic and disastrous conflict between Iraq and Iran.

We cannot allow our Organization to assume the role of a Wailing Wall. The United Nations can, and indeed should, proceed to carry out the activities envisaged in its Charter.

Questions relating to the social and economic development of peoples, the restructuring of international economic relations and the external debt are among the global issues which face mankind and the United Nations. I agree with what my predecessor in this high office said at the beginning of the forty-first session, namely:

"Many of the greatest hopes of mankind centre on economic and social progress, which must remain a primary goal of the United Nations system."

(A/41/PV.1, p. 22)

In his statement at the opening of the session of the Economic and Social Council at Geneva this summer, the Secretary-General of the United Nations drew a very critical, and at the same time realistic, picture of the world economic situation. He rightly noted that:

"The international community must be more responsive to the increasingly complex problems of today but, equally important, better prepared for the challenges of the coming decades."

The solution of the acute and complex problems of the developing countries and the overcoming of underdevelopment concern us all, I believe. Ways to resolve them are shown in decisions adopted by the United Nations.

(The President)

Efforts to find a global and just solution to the problem of the external debt are undoubtedly a matter of high priority. They should be duly responsive to the interests of the developing countries and to the requirements of a stable development of the world economy. Various attempts are being made to reorganize the sorely disturbed international monetary and financial relations after the destruction which has quite clearly taken place. In my opinion, it is equally important that an understanding on a just and democratic basis should be in the interests of all. It is well known how much the developing countries are suffering from a drain on their resources and unequal terms of trade and exchange. It is becoming more important for the developing countries to pool their efforts to overcome their underdevelopment and to strengthen their economic independence, as can be noted following several conferences on South-South co-operation. Likewise, it remains the task of all States to participate actively in removing obsolete structures and developing equal and mutually advantageous economic relations throughout the world.

This fact and the growing interdependence of national economies and the current revolutionizing scientific and technological processes call for predictability and stability in international economic relations. Global problems need global solutions. In this interdependent world, policies based on the law of might, the monopoly of solutions or unilateral action could lead not only to a dead end but, indeed, to disaster. There are more than enough international problems for us to cope with - and new ones are arising.

(The President)

Thus, efforts to combat international terrorism have become a cause of general concern. The same is true of the struggle against narcotic drugs and against the disease of AIDS (acquired immuno deficiency syndrome), whose consequences cannot yet be foreseen. We should highly commend and promote the efforts being made in the United Nations system to bring about international co-operation in these areas.

The disturbed interaction between nature and society, of which there are many causes, is one of those factors which reminds us of the limits of the burdens our planet can bear. These problems are clearly elucidated in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report, "Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond", as well as in the Brundtland report, entitled "Our Common Future". They deserve our constant and vigilant attention.

One of the main items to be discussed at this session of the General Assembly - as indeed it has been at previous sessions - is the situation in southern Africa, which continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and security. World-wide solidarity with those in South Africa who are struggling against apartheid and racial discrimination will, I am sure, lead to political changes. An independent and non-aligned Namibia, as called for in General Assembly resolutions, would undoubtedly serve as a stabilizing factor in southern Africa.

Our Organization's tradition in implementation of human rights - political, economic, social and cultural - is well known; it has become a part of history. The United Nations can be justly proud of what it has achieved in codifying international law in this field. The contribution made by our Organization in helping to ease and solve humanitarian problems throughout the contemporary world has been universally acknowledged. Let us ensure that the attention of world public opinion will continue to be drawn to instances of mass violations of human rights.

(The President)

All these global problems of today's and tomorrow's world can be resolved provided that a new thinking gains ground and Member States both within and outside the Organization faithfully engage in close co-operation based on trust and the renunciation of old stereotypes and prejudices. What is needed now more than ever before is dialogue, a frank exchange of views and mutual understanding.

As I see it, we are not confronted with a crisis of multilateralism; rather, we have to carry out successfully the tasks of multilateral organizations - something which will be to the benefit of all. In this endeavour, we must meet each other half-way, always guided by a sense of responsibility and realism. To my mind there can be no doubt that the United Nations has the proper tools, which we should fully utilize. The Charter is a viable document; the United Nations is a viable Organization. This is evidenced by the wide response to the fortieth anniversary session of our Organization, as well as by the numerous events organized in 1986, the International Year of Peace. This has been borne out by increased activity on the part of a broad range of non-governmental organizations in promoting the cause of the United Nations.

Let us always recall the historic significance of the conclusion drawn by the founding fathers of the United Nations following the terrible experience of the Second World War: world peace can no longer be achieved by confrontation; it can be established only through co-operation. Today, in the nuclear era, this conclusion has lost none of its relevancy; on the contrary, it has acquired even greater significance.

Our Organization has acquired ample experience, both positive and negative. The diversity of the interests of States is reflected in it. Nobody can or should ignore that. As the Assembly is aware, the art is in balancing those diverse interests of all States - large, medium and small - and achieving consensus. Such

(The President)

should be our contribution to the much needed stability in international relations for which we are striving.

In performing the duties of the office to which you have elected me I shall be anxious to continue proved traditions, to be open to new ideas and to carry out the presidency relying constantly on collective wisdom. I intend always to seek the advice and assistance of the Vice-Presidents, of the Chairmen of the Committees and of the delegations.

The dimensions of the tasks before us call for further reconsideration of the methods and procedures we have been applying in our Organization's work. There is agreement about this. The report of the Group of 18, the valuable recommendations made by former Presidents of the General Assembly, and resolution 41/213 show us the way. Much has already been done to enhance the effectiveness of our Organization, but much remains to be done.

The Security Council has worked intensively, in particular during the last few months. Without doubt it has the potential to promote the effectiveness of our Organization's work. What could be said against the Security Council's considering periodically, and at a high level, essential issues concerning the safeguarding of peace, and adopting appropriate decisions? What could be said against making more effective use of the possibility of taking preventive measures to avoid conflict, as provided for in the Charter?

(The President)

All that in my view would be desirable and urgently necessary. The enhancement of the role and effectiveness of the General Assembly is in our hands, hence the need to concentrate on principled decisions and purposeful actions and to relegate particular interests to the background. As I see it, there are, today more than ever, opportunities to achieve the objectives we have set ourselves and to enhance the political weight of the General Assembly. I strongly appeal to the plenary Assembly and its Main Committees to exhaust every possibility of reaching mutual understandings - for example, by means of binding consensuses. Labour undertaken to bring that about will not be labour lost.

(spoke in English)

May the forty-second session of the General Assembly, which we open today, make a noticeable contribution towards the fulfilment of mankind's dream to live a peaceful and creative life when all peoples can develop in accordance with their own will and achieve happiness and prosperity.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): As announced in the Journal, immediately following this plenary meeting we shall hold consecutive meetings of the Main Committees for the purpose of electing their Chairmen and, thereafter, the second plenary meeting will be convened for the election of the Vice Presidents of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.