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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE SEVENTY-SECOND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 7 December 1988, at 10.30 a.m.

President:

Mr. CAPUTO

(Argentina)

- Address by Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
- Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations [41]
- Fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [38] (continued)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the Official Records of the General Assembly.

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

ADDRESS BY MR. MIKHAIL GORBACHEV, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION, PRESIDENT OF THE PRESIDUM OF THE SUPREME SOVIET OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): This morning the Assembly will hear an address by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, His Excellency Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President GORBACHEV (interpretation from Russian): We have come here to show our respect for the United Nations, which increasingly has been manifesting its ability to act as a unique international centre in the service of peace and security.

We have come here to show our respect for the dignity of this Organization, capable of accumulating the collective wisdom and will of mankind.

Recent events have been making it increasingly clear that the world needs such an organization, and that the Organization itself needs the active involvement of all its Members, their support for its initiatives and actions and their potentialities and original contributions that enrich its activity.

(President Gorbachev)

A little more than a year ago, in an article entitled "Realities and safeguards for a secure world" (A/42/574), I set out some ideas on problems of concern to the United Nations.

The time since then has given fresh food for thought. World developments have indeed come to a crucial point.

The role played by the Soviet Union in world affairs is well known, and in view of the revolutionary perestroika under way in our country, which contains a tremendous potential for peace and international co-operation, we are now particularly interested in being properly understood.

That is why we have come here to address this most authoritative world body and to share our thoughts with it. We want it to be the first to learn of our new, important decisions.

What will mankind be like when it enters the twenty-first century? People are already fascinated by this not-too-distant future. We are looking ahead to it with hopes for the best, and yet with a feeling of concern.

(President Gorbachev)

The world in which we live today is radically different from what it was at the beginning, or even in the middle, of this century, and it continues to change, as do all its components.

The advent of nuclear weapons was just another tragic reminder of the fundamental nature of that change. A material symbol and expression of absolute military power, nuclear weapons at the same time revealed the absolute limits of that power. The problem of mankind's survival and self-preservation came to the fore.

We are witnessing most profound social change. Whether in the East or the South, the West or the North, hundreds of millions of people, new nations and States, new public movements and ideologies have moved to the forefront of history. Broad-based and frequently turbulent popular movements have given expression, in a multidimensional and contradictory way, to a longing for independence, democracy and social justice. The idea of democratizing the entire world order has become a powerful socio-political force.

At the same time the scientific and technological revolution has turned many economic, food, energy, environmental, information and population problems, which only recently we treated as national or regional, into global problems.

Thanks to the advances in mass media and means of transportation the world seems to have become more visible and tangible. International communication has become easier than ever before. Today, the preservation of any kind of closed society is hardly possible. This calls for a radical review of approaches to the totality of the problems of international co-operation as a major element of universal security. The world economy is becoming a single organism, and no State, whatever its social system or economic status, can develop normally outside it.

(President Gorbachev)

That places on the agenda the need to devise fundamentally new machinery for the functioning of the world economy, a new structure of the international division of labour.

At the same time, the growth of the world economy reveals the contradictions and limits inherent in traditional-type industrialization. Its further extension and intensification spell environmental catastrophe.

However, there are still many countries without sufficiently developed industries, and some have not yet moved beyond the pre-industrial stage. One of the major problems is whether the process of their economic growth will follow the old technological patterns or whether they can join in the search for environmentally clean production. And there is another problem: instead of diminishing, the gap between the developed and most of the developing countries is increasingly growing into a serious global threat. Hence the need to begin a search for a fundamentally new type of industrial progress, one that would meet the interests of all peoples and States.

In a word, the new realities are changing the entire world situation. The differences and contradictions inherited from the past are diminishing or being displaced, but new ones are emerging. Some of the past differences and disputes are losing their importance, but conflicts of a different kind are taking their place.

Life is making us abandon established stereotypes and outdated views. It is making us discard illusions. The very concept of the nature and criteria of progress is changing. It would be naive to think that the problems plaguing mankind today can be solved with the means and methods that were applied or that seemed to work in the past. Indeed, mankind has accumulated a wealth of experience

(President Gorbachev)

in the process of political, economic and social development under highly diverse conditions. But that experience belongs to the practices and to a world that have become, or are becoming, parts of the past. That is one of the signs of the crucial nature of the current phase of history.

The greatest philosophers sought to grasp the laws of social development and find an answer to the main question: how to make man's life happy, just and safe. Two great revolutions, the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917, exerted a powerful impact on the very nature of history and radically changed the course of world developments. Both of them, each in its own way, gave a tremendous impetus to mankind's progress. To a large extent those two revolutions shaped the way of thinking that is still prevalent in social consciousness. It is a most precious spiritual heritage.

But today we face a different world, for which we must seek a different road to the future. In seeking it, we must, of course, draw upon accumulated experience and yet be aware of the fundamental differences between the situation yesterday and what we are facing today. Yet the novelty of the tasks before us, as well as their difficulties, goes well beyond that. Today, we have entered an era when progress will be shaped by universal human interests. Awareness of that dictates that world politics, too, should be guided by the primacy of universal human values.

The history of past centuries and millennia was a history of wars that raged almost everywhere, of frequent desperate battles to the point of mutual annihilation. They grew out of clashes of social and political interests, national enmity, ideological or religious incompatibility. All that did happen. And even today, many would want those vestiges of the past to be accepted as immutable law.

(President Gorbachev)

However, concurrently with wars, animosities and divisions among peoples and countries, another trend, with equally objective causes, was gaining momentum: the process of the emergence of a mutually interrelated and integral world. Today, further world progress is possible only through a search for universal human consensus as we move forward to a new world order.

We have come to a point where the disorderly play of elemental forces leads to an impasse. The international community must learn how it can shape and guide developments in such a way as to preserve our civilization and to make it safe for all and more conducive to normal life.

We are speaking of co-operation, which could be more accurately termed co-creation and co-development. The formula of development at the expense of others is on the way out. In the light of existing realities, no genuine progress is possible at the expense of the rights and freedoms of individuals and nations or at the expense of nature.

Efforts to solve global problems require a new scope and quality of interaction of States and socio-political currents, regardless of ideological or other differences.

Of course, radical changes and revolutionary transformations will continue to occur within individual countries and social structures. This is how it was and this is how it will be. But here, too, our time marks a change. Internal transformations can no longer advance their national goals if they develop only along parallel courses with others without making use of the achievements of the outside world and of the potential inherent in equitable co-operation.

In those circumstances, any interference in such internal developments designed to redirect them to someone's liking would have all the more destructive consequences for the establishment of a peaceful order.

(President Gorbachev)

In the past differences were often a factor causing mutual rejection. Now, they have a chance of becoming a factor for mutual enrichment and mutual attraction.

Behind differences in social systems, in ways of life and in preferences for certain values stand different interests. There is no escaping that fact.

(President Gorbachev)

But, equally, there is no escaping the need to find a balance of interests within an international framework, which has become a condition for survival and progress.

Pondering all this, one comes to the conclusion that, if we are to take into account the lessons of the past and the realities of the present, if we are to reckon with the objective logic of world development, we must look together for ways to improve the international situation and build a new world, and, if so, we ought to agree on the basic, truly universal prerequisites and principles of such action.

It is obvious, for instance, that the use or threat of force can no longer, and must no longer, be an instrument of foreign policy. This applies, above all, to nuclear arms, but that is not the only thing that matters. All of us, and primarily the stronger of us, must exercise self-restraint and totally rule out any outward-oriented use of force. That is the first and the most important component of a non-violent world, an ideal which we proclaimed, together with India, in the Delhi Declaration and which we invite you to follow.

After all, it is now quite clear that building-up military power makes no country omnipotent. What is more, one-sided reliance on military power ultimately weakens other components of national security.

It is also quite clear to us that the principle of freedom of choice is mandatory. Its non-recognition is fraught with extremely grave consequences for world peace. Denying that right to peoples, under whatever pretext or rhetorical guise, jeopardizes even the fragile balance that has been attained. Freedom of choice is a universal principle that should allow of no exceptions.

It was not simply out of good intentions that we came to the conclusion that that principle was absolute. We were driven to it by an unbiased analysis of the objective trends of today. More and more characteristic of them is the

(President Gorbachev)

increasingly multi-optional nature of social development in different countries. This applies both to the capitalist and to the socialist systems. The diversity of the socio-political structures that have grown out of national liberation movements over the past decades also attests to this.

This objective fact calls for respect for the views and positions of others, tolerance, a willingness to perceive something different as not necessarily bad or hostile, and an ability to learn to live side by side with others, while remaining different and not always agreeing with each other. As the world asserts its diversity, attempts to look down on others and to teach them one's own brand of democracy become totally improper, to say nothing of the fact that democratic values intended for export often lose their worth very quickly.

What we are talking about, therefore, is unity in diversity. If we assert this politically, if we reaffirm our adherence to freedom of choice, then there is no room for the view that some live on Earth by virtue of divine will, while others are here quite by chance. The time has come to discard such thinking and to shape our policies accordingly. This would open up prospects for strengthening the unity of the world.

The new phase also requires de-ideologizing relations among States. We are not abandoning our convictions, our philosophy or traditions, nor do we urge anyone to abandon theirs. However, neither do we have any intention of being hemmed in by our values, which would result in intellectual impoverishment, for it would mean rejecting a powerful source of development - the exchange of everything original that each nation has independently created.

In the course of such exchange, let everyone show the advantages of their social system, their way of life and their values, not just by words or propaganda, but by real deeds. That would be a fair rivalry of ideologies. But it should not be extended to relations among States, otherwise we should simply be unable to

(President Gorbachev)

solve any of the world's problems, such as developing wide-ranging, mutually beneficial and equitable co-operation among nations; making efficient use of the achievements of scientific and technological revolution; restructuring the world economy and protecting the environment; and overcoming backwardness and eliminating hunger, disease, illiteracy and other global scourges. Similarly, we would not be able to eliminate the nuclear threat and militarism.

These are our reflections on the patterns of world development on the threshold of the twenty-first century.

Of course, we are far from claiming to be in possession of the ultimate truth, but, on the basis of a thorough analysis of the past and newly-emerging realities, we have concluded that it is on these lines that we should jointly seek the way to the supremacy of the universal human idea over the endless multitude of centrifugal forces, and to preserve the vitality of this civilization, which is possibly the only one in the entire universe.

Could this view be a little too romantic? Are we not overestimating the potential and maturity of the world's social consciousness? We have heard such doubts and such questions, both in our country and from some of our Western partners.

I am convinced that we are not floating above reality. Forces have already emerged in the world that in one way or another stimulate the arrival of a period of peace. The peoples and large sectors of the public do, indeed, ardently wish for an improvement in the situation. They want to learn to co-operate. It is sometimes amazing how powerful this trend is. It is also important that it is beginning to shape policies.

Changes in philosophical approaches and in political relations form a solid prerequisite for imparting, in line with worldwide objective processes, a powerful impetus to the efforts designed to establish new relations among States. Even

(President Gorbachev)

those politicians whose activities used to be geared to the Cold War and sometimes linked with its most critical phases are now drawing appropriate conclusions. Of all people, they find it particularly hard to abandon old stereotypes and past practices, and, if even they are changing course, it is clear that, when new generations take over, opportunities will increase in number.

In short, the understanding of the need for a period of peace is gaining ground and beginning to prevail. This has made it possible to take the first real steps towards creating a healthier international environment and towards disarmament.

What are the practical implications of that? It would be natural and sensible not to abandon everything positive that has already been accomplished and to build on the gains of the past few years, on all that we have created working together. I refer to the process of negotiations on nuclear arms, conventional weapons and chemical weapons and the search for political approaches to ending regional conflicts. Of course, I refer, above all, to political dialogue - a more intense and open dialogue aimed at the very heart of problems instead of confrontation, at an exchange of constructive ideas instead of recriminations. Without political dialogue, the process of negotiations cannot advance.

We regard prospects for the near and more distant future quite optimistically. Just look at the changes in our relations with the United States. Little by little, mutual understanding has started to develop and elements of trust have emerged, without which it is very hard to make headway in politics.

In Europe, such elements are even more numerous. The Helsinki process is a great process. I believe that it remains fully valid. Its philosophical, political, practical and other dimensions must all be preserved and enhanced, while taking into account new circumstances.

(President Gorbachev)

Current realities make it imperative that the dialogue that ensures normal and constructive evolution of international affairs involve, on a continuous and active basis, all countries and regions of the world, including such major Powers as India, China, Japan and Brazil, and other countries - big, medium and small.

I am in favour of a more dynamic and substantive political dialogue, of strengthening the political prerequisites for improvement of the international climate. That would make it easier to find practical solutions to many problems. Tough though it may be, this is the road that we must travel.

Everyone should join in the movement towards greater world unity. Today this is particularly important, for we are approaching a very important point at which we shall have to face the question of how to ensure world solidarity and the stability and dynamism of international relations.

Yet, in my talks with foreign Government and political leaders, with whom I have had over 200 meetings, I have sometimes sensed their dissatisfaction that at this crucial time, for one reason or another, they sometimes find themselves on the sidelines, as it were, of the main issues of world politics. It is natural and appropriate that no one is willing to resign himself to that.

If, although different, we are indeed part of the same civilization, if we are aware of the interdependence of the contemporary world, this fact must be increasingly present in politics and in practical efforts to harmonize international relations. Perhaps the term perestroika would not be quite appropriate in this context, but I do call for the building of new international relations.

I am convinced that our time and the realities of today's world make it necessary to internationalize dialogue and the negotiating process. This is the

(President Gorbachev)

main, most general conclusion that we have come to in studying the global trends that have been gaining momentum in recent years and in participating in world politics.

In this specific historical situation we face the question of a new role for the United Nations. We feel that States must to some extent review their attitude to the United Nations - this unique instrument without which world politics would be inconceivable today. The recent reinvigoration of its peace-making role has again demonstrated the ability of the United Nations to assist its Members in coping with the daunting challenges of our time and working to humanize their relations.

Regrettably, shortly after it was established the Organization sustained the onslaught of the cold war. For many years it was the scene of propaganda battles and continuous political confrontation. Let historians argue who is more and who is less to blame for this. What political leaders today need to do is to draw lessons from that chapter in the history of the United Nations, which turned out to be at odds with the very meaning and objectives of our Organization. One of the most bitter and important lessons lies in the long list of missed opportunities. As a result, at a certain point the authority of the United Nations diminished, and many of its attempts to act failed.

It is highly significant that the reinvigoration of the role of the United Nations is linked to an improvement in the international climate. In a way, the United Nations blends together the interests of different States. It is the only Organization capable of merging into a single current their bilateral, regional and global efforts.

New prospects are opening up for it in all areas that fall naturally under its responsibility - the politico-military, economic, scientific, technological,

(President Gorbachev)

environmental and humanitarian areas. Let us take, for example, the problem of development, which is a truly universal human problem. The conditions in which tens of millions of people live in a number of third-world regions are becoming a real threat to all mankind.

No closed entities or even regional communities of States, important though they are, are capable of untangling the main knots that tie up the principal avenues of world economic relations - North-South, East-West, South-South, South-East and East-East. What is needed here is to combine the efforts and take into account the interests of all groups of countries - something that only this Organization, the United Nations, can accomplish.

External debt is one of the gravest problems. Let us not forget that in the age of colonialism the developing world, at the cost of countless losses and sacrifices, financed the prosperity of a large portion of the world community. The time has come to make up for the losses that accompanied its historic and tragic contribution to global material progress.

We are convinced that here, too, the internationalization of our approach offers a way out. Looking at things realistically we have to admit that the accumulated debt cannot be repaid or recovered on the original terms. The Soviet Union is prepared to institute a lengthy moratorium of up to 100 years on debt-servicing by the least developed countries, and in quite a few cases to write off the debt altogether.

As regards other developing countries, we invite members to consider the following: limiting their official debt-servicing payments, depending on the economic performance of each of them, or granting them a long period of deferral of the repayment of a major portion of their debt; supporting the appeal of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for reduction of debts to commercial banks; guaranteeing government support for market arrangements to assist in

(President Gorbachev)

third-world debt settlement, including the formation of a specialized international agency that would repurchase debts at a discount.

The Soviet Union favours a substantive discussion in multilateral forums of ways of settling the debt crisis, including consultations, under the auspices of the United Nations, among Heads of Government of debtor and creditor countries.

International economic security is inconceivable unless related not only to disarmament but also to the elimination of the threat to the world's environment. In a number of regions the state of the environment is simply frightening. A conference on the environment within the framework of the United Nations is scheduled for 1992. We welcome this decision and are working to ensure that this forum produces results commensurate with the scope of the problem.

But time is running out, although much is being done in various countries. Here again I should just like to underscore most emphatically the prospects opening up in the process of disarmament - particularly, of course, nuclear disarmament - for environmental revival.

Let us also think about setting up within the framework of the United Nations a centre for emergency environmental assistance. Its function would be to send international groups of experts without delay to areas with a badly deteriorating environment. The Soviet Union is also ready to co-operate in establishing an international space laboratory or manned orbital station designed exclusively for monitoring the state of the environment.

In the general area of space exploration the outlines of a future space industry are becoming increasingly clear. The position of the Soviet Union is well known: activities in outer space must rule out the appearance of weapons there. Here again there has to be a legal base. The groundwork for it - the provisions of the 1967 Treaty and other agreements - is already in place.

(President Gorbachev)

However, there is already a strongly felt need to develop an all-embracing régime for peaceful work in outer space. Verification of compliance with that régime would be entrusted to a world space organization. We have put forward on more than one occasion our proposal to establish such an organization. We are prepared to incorporate within its system our Krasnoyarsk radar station. A decision has already been taken to place that radar under the authority of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Soviet scientists are prepared to receive their foreign colleagues and discuss with them ways of converting it into an international centre for peaceful co-operation by dismantling and refitting certain units and structures, and to provide additional equipment. The entire system could function under the auspices of the United Nations.

The whole world welcomes the efforts of this Organization, its Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, and his representatives in untying knots of regional problems. I should like to elaborate on this. Paraphrasing the words of the English poet that Hemingway took as an epigraph for his famous novel, I will say this: the bell of every regional conflict tolls for all of us.

(President Gorbachev)

That is particularly true since those conflicts are already taking place in the third world, which already faces many ills and problems of such magnitude that it has to be a matter of concern to us all.

The year 1988 has brought a glimmer of hope in this area of our common concerns as well. That has been felt in almost all regional crises. On some of them, there has been movement. We welcome it, and we did what we could to contribute to it.

I will single out only Afghanistan.

The Geneva Accords, whose fundamental and practical significance has been praised throughout the world, provided a possibility for completing the process of settlement even before the end of this year. That did not happen.

That unfortunate fact reminds us once again of the political, legal and moral significance of the Roman maxim pacta sunt servanda - treaties must be observed.

I do not want to use this rostrum for recriminations against anyone.

But it is our view that, within the competence of the United Nations, the General Assembly resolution adopted last November could be supplemented by some specific measures.

In the words of that resolution, for the urgent achievement of a comprehensive solution by the Afghans themselves of the question of broad-based Government, the following should be undertaken:

A complete cease-fire, effective everywhere as of 1 January 1989, and the cessation of all offensive operations or shelling, with the opposing Afghan groups retaining, for the duration of negotiations, all territories under their control; linked to that, stopping as of the same date any supplies of arms to all belligerents; for the period of establishing a broad-based Government, as provided for in the General Assembly resolution, sending to Kabul and other strategic centres of the country a contingent of United Nations peace-keeping forces. We

(President Gorbachev)

also request the Secretary-General to facilitate early implementation of the idea of holding an international conference on the neutrality and demilitarization of Afghanistan.

We shall continue most actively to assist in healing the wounds of the war and are prepared to co-operate in that endeavour both with the United Nations and on a bilateral basis.

We support the proposal to create under the auspices of the United Nations a voluntary international peace corps to assist in the revival of Afghanistan.

In the context of the problems of settling regional conflicts, I have to express my opinion on the serious incident that has recently affected the work of this session. The Chairman of an organization that has observer status at the United Nations was not allowed by the US authorities to come to New York to address the General Assembly. I am referring to Yasser Arafat.

What is more, that happened at a time when the Palestine Liberation Organization had made a constructive step that facilitates the search for a solution to the Middle East problem with the involvement of the United Nations Security Council. It happened at a time when a positive trend had become apparent towards a political settlement of other regional conflicts, in many cases with the assistance of the USSR and the United States. We voice our deep regret over the incident and our solidarity with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The concept of comprehensive international security is based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and is predicated on the binding nature of international law for all States.

Being in favour of demilitarizing international relations, we want political and legal methods to prevail in solving whatever problems may arise.

Our ideal is a world community of States which are based on the rule of law and which subordinate their foreign policy activities to law.

(President Gorbachev)

The achievement of that goal would be facilitated by an agreement within the United Nations on a uniform understanding of the principles and norms of international law, their codification with due regard to new conditions and the development of legal norms for new areas of co-operation.

In a nuclear age the effectiveness of international law should be based not on enforcing compliance but rather on norms reflecting a balance of State interests.

In addition to the ever-increasing awareness of the objective commonality of our destiny, that would make every State genuinely interested in exercising self-restraint within the bounds of international law.

Democratizing international relations means not only a maximum degree of internationalization in the efforts of all members of the world community to solve problems; it also means humanizing those relations.

International ties will fully reflect the genuine interests of the peoples and effectively serve the cause of their common security only when the human being and his concerns, rights and freedoms become the centre of all things.

In that context, I should like to join the voice of my country in the expressions of high appreciation of the significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted 40 years ago on 10 December 1948.

Today, that document retains its significance. It, too, reflects the universal nature of the goals and objectives of the United Nations.

The most fitting way for a State to observe the anniversary of the Declaration is to improve its domestic conditions for respecting and protecting the rights of its own citizens.

Before I inform you on what specifically we have undertaken recently in that respect, I should like to say the following.

Our country is going through a period of truly revolutionary uplifting.

(President Gorbachev)

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(President Gorbachev)

The process of perestroika is gaining momentum. We began with formulation of the theoretical concept of perestroika. We had to evaluate the nature and the magnitude of problems, to understand the lessons of the past and express that in the form of political conclusions and programmes. That was done.

The theoretical work, a reassessment of what is happening, the finalization, enrichment and readjustment of political positions have not been completed. They are continuing.

But it was essential to begin with an overall concept, which, as now confirmed by the experience of these past years, has generally proved to be correct and has no alternative.

For our society to participate in efforts to implement the plans of perestroika, it had to be democratized in practice. Under the sign of democratization, perestroika has now spread to politics, the economy, intellectual life and ideology.

We have initiated a radical economic reform. We have gained experience. At the start of next year, the entire national economy will be redirected to new forms and methods of operation. That also means profoundly reorganizing relations of production and releasing the tremendous potential inherent in socialist property.

Undertaking such bold revolutionary transformations, we realized that there would be mistakes, and also opposition, that new approaches would generate new problems. We also foresaw the possibility of slow-downs in some areas.

But the guarantee that the overall process of perestroika will steadily move forward and gain strength lies in a profound democratic reform of the entire system of power and administration.

With the recent decisions by the USSR Supreme Soviet on amendments to the Constitution and the adoption of the Law on Elections, we have completed the first stage of the process of political reform.

(President Gorbachev)

Without pausing, we have begun the second stage of this process with the main task of improving the relationship between the centre and the republics, harmonizing inter-ethnic relations on the principles of Leninist internationalism that we inherited from the Great Revolution, and at the same time reorganizing the local system of Soviet power.

A great deal of work lies ahead. Major tasks will have to be dealt with concurrently.

We are full of confidence. We have a theory and a policy, and also the vanguard force of perestroika - the Party, which is also restructuring itself in accordance with new tasks and fundamental changes in society as a whole.

What is most important is that all our peoples and all generations of citizens of our great country support perestroika.

We have become deeply involved in building a socialist State based on the rule of law. Work on a series of new laws has been completed or is nearing completion.

Many of them will enter into force as early as 1989, and we expect them to meet the highest standards from the standpoint of ensuring the rights of the individual.

Soviet democracy will be placed on a solid normative base. I am referring, in particular, to laws on the freedom of conscience, glasnost, public associations, organizations, and many others.

In places of confinement there are no persons convicted for their political or religious beliefs.

Additional guarantees are to be included in the new draft laws that rule out any form of persecution on those grounds.

(President Gorbachev)

Naturally this does not apply to those who have committed actual criminal offences or State crimes, such as espionage, sabotage, terrorism and so on, whatever their political or ideological beliefs. Draft amendments to the penal code have been prepared and are awaiting their turn. Among the articles being revised are those relating to capital punishment.

The problem of exit from and entry to our country, including the question of leaving it for family reunification, is being dealt with in a humane spirit. As the Assembly will know, one of the reasons for refusal of permission to leave is a person's knowledge of secrets. Strictly warranted time limitations on the secrecy rule will now be applied. Every person seeking employment at certain agencies or enterprises will be informed of this rule. In case of disputes there is a right of appeal under the law. This removes from the agenda the problem of the so-called refuseniks.

We intend to expand the Soviet Union's participation in the human rights monitoring arrangements of the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). We believe that the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice at The Hague as regards the interpretation and implementation of agreements on human rights should be binding on all States. We regard as part of the Helsinki process the cessation of jamming of all foreign radio broadcasts beamed at the Soviet Union.

Overall, this is our credo: political problems must be solved by political means only; human problems in a humane way only.

Let me now turn to the main issue without which none of the problems of the coming century can be solved: disarmament.

(President Gorbachev)

International development and communications have been distorted by the arms race and the militarization of thinking. As the Assembly will know, on 15 January 1986 the Soviet Union put forward a programme for building a nuclear-weapon-free world. Translated into actual negotiating positions, it has already produced material results. Tomorrow marks the first anniversary of the signing of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - INF Treaty. I am therefore particularly pleased to note that the implementation of the Treaty - the elimination of missiles - is proceeding normally in an atmosphere of trust and businesslike work. A large breach has thus been made in a seemingly unbreakable wall of suspicion and animosity. We are witnessing the emergence of a new, historic reality: a turning away from the principle of super-armament to the principle of reasonable defence sufficiency.

We are present at the birth of a new model of ensuring security, not through the build-up of arms, as was almost always the case in the past, but on the contrary through their reduction on the basis of compromise. The Soviet leadership has decided to demonstrate once again its readiness to reinforce this healthy process, not only by words but also by deeds.

Today I can report to the General Assembly that the Soviet Union has taken a decision to reduce its armed forces. Within the next two years their numerical strength will be reduced by 500,000 men. The numbers of conventional armaments will also be substantially reduced. This will be done unilaterally, without relation to the talks on the mandate of the Vienna meeting.

By agreement with our Warsaw Treaty allies we have decided to withdraw, by 1991, six tank divisions from the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia and

(President Gorbachev)

Hungary and to disband them. Assault landing troops and several other formations and units, including assault crossing units with their weapons and combat equipment, will also be withdrawn from the groups of Soviet forces stationed in those countries. Soviet forces stationed in those countries will be reduced by 50,000 men and their armaments by 5,000 tanks.

All Soviet divisions remaining for the time being on the territories of our allies are being reorganized. Their structure will be different from what it is now; after a major cutback in their tanks it will become clearly defensive.

At the same time we shall reduce the numerical strength of the armed forces and the numbers of armaments stationed in the European part of the Soviet Union. In total, Soviet armed forces in this part of our country and in the territories of our European allies will be reduced by 10,000 tanks, 8,500 artillery systems and 800 combat aircraft.

Over these two years we intend to reduce significantly our armed forces in the Asian part of our country too. By agreement with the Government of the Mongolian People's Republic a major portion of Soviet troops temporarily stationed there will return home.

In taking this fundamental decision the Soviet leadership is expressing the will of the people, who have undertaken a profound renewal of their entire socialist society. We shall maintain our country's defence capability at a level of reasonable and reliable sufficiency so that no one will be tempted to encroach on the security of the Soviet Union and our allies.

By all our activities in favour of demilitarizing international relations we wish to draw the attention of the international community to yet another pressing problem: the problem of transition from the economy of armaments to an economy of disarmament. Is conversion of military production a realistic idea? I have already had occasion to speak about this. We think that it is indeed realistic.

(President Gorbachev)

For its part the Soviet Union is prepared to take the following steps: within the framework of our economic reform to draw up and make public our internal conversion plan; in the course of 1989 to draw up, as an experiment, conversion plans for two or three defence plants; and to make public our experience in providing employment for specialists from military industry and in using its equipment, buildings and structures in civilian production.

It is desirable that all States, and in the first place the major military Powers, should submit their national conversion plans to the United Nations. It would be useful also to set up a group of scientists to undertake a thorough analysis of the problem of conversion as a whole and as applied to individual countries and regions and report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and subsequently for this matter to be considered at a session of the General Assembly.

Finally, since I am here on American soil, and also for other obvious reasons, I have to turn to the subject of our relations with this great country. I had a chance to appreciate the full measure of its hospitality during my memorable visit to Washington exactly a year ago. Relations between the Soviet Union and the United States of America have a history of five and a half decades. As the world has changed, so have the nature, role and place of those relations in world politics. For too long they developed along the lines of confrontation and sometimes animosity, either overt or covert. But in the last few years the entire world has been able to breathe a sigh of relief, thanks to the changes for the better in the substance and the atmosphere of the relationship between Moscow and Washington.

No one intends to underestimate the seriousness of our differences and the toughness of our outstanding problems. We have, however, already graduated from

(President Gorbachev)

the primary school of learning to understand each other and seek solutions in both our own and the common interest.

The USSR and the United States have built the largest nuclear and missile arsenals; but it is those two countries that, having become specifically aware of their responsibility, have been the first to conclude a treaty on the reduction and physical elimination of a portion of their armaments which posed a threat to both of them and to all other countries. Both countries possess the greatest and most sophisticated military secrets; but it is those two countries that have laid a basis for and are further developing a system of mutual verification both of the elimination of armaments and of the reduction and prohibition of their production. It is those two countries that are accumulating experience for future bilateral and multilateral agreements.

We value this. We acknowledge and appreciate the contributions made by President Ronald Reagan and by the members of his Administration, particularly Mr. George Shultz.

All this is our joint investment in a venture of historic importance. We must not lose that investment, or leave it idle.

(President Gorbachev)

The next United States administration, headed by President-elect George Bush, will find in us a partner who is ready - without long pauses or backtracking - to continue the dialogue in a spirit of realism, openness and goodwill, with a willingness to achieve concrete results working on the agenda which covers the main issues of Soviet/United States relations and world politics.

I have in mind, above all, consistent movement towards a treaty on 50-per-cent reductions in strategic offensive arms while preserving the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty); working out a convention on the elimination of chemical weapons - here, as we see it, prerequisites exist to make 1989 a decisive year; and negotiations on the reduction of conventional arms and armed forces in Europe.

I also have in mind economic, environmental and humanistic problems in their broadest sense.

It would be quite wrong to put the positive changes in the international situation exclusively to the credit of the USSR and the United States. The Soviet Union highly appreciates the major and original contribution of socialist countries in the process of creating a healthier international environment.

During the course of negotiations we are constantly aware of the presence of other major Powers, both nuclear and non-nuclear. Many countries, including medium-sized and small countries, and of course the Non-Aligned Movement and the Intercontinental Group of Six, are playing a uniquely important constructive role.

We in Moscow are happy that an ever-increasing number of statesmen, political, party and public figures and - I should like to emphasize this - scientists, cultural figures, representatives of mass movements and various churches, and

(President Gorbachev)

activists of the so-called people's diplomacy are ready to shoulder the burden of universal responsibility.

In this regard I believe that the idea of convening on a regular basis, under the auspices of the United Nations, an assembly of public organizations deserves attention.

We are not inclined to simplify the situation in the world.

Yes, the trend towards disarmament has been given a powerful impetus, and the process is gaining a momentum of its own. But it has not yet become irreversible.

Yes, the willingness to give up confrontation in favour of dialogue and co-operation is being felt strongly. But it is still far from becoming a permanent feature in the practice of international relations.

Yes, movement towards a nuclear-weapon-free and non-violent world is capable of radically transforming the political and intellectual identity of our planet. But only the first steps have been taken, and even they have been met with mistrust in certain influential quarters and face resistance.

The legacy and the inertia of the past continue to be felt. Profound contradictions and the roots of many conflicts have not disappeared. And there remains another fundamental fact, which is that a peaceful period will be taking shape in the context of the existence and rivalry of different socio-economic and political systems.

However, the thrust of our international efforts and one of the key elements of the new thinking is that this rivalry should be given a quality of reasonable competition with due regard for freedom of choice and a balance of interests. Then it will become even more useful and productive from the standpoint of global development.

(President Gorbachev)

Otherwise, if as in the past the arms race remains its basic component, this rivalry will be deadly. More and more people throughout the world - leaders as well as ordinary people - are beginning to understand that.

I conclude my first address to the United Nations with the same feeling that I had when I began it - a feeling of responsibility to my own people and to the world community.

We are meeting at the end of a year which has meant so much for the United Nations and on the eve of a year from which we all expect so much.

I should like to believe that our hopes will be matched by our joint efforts to put an end to an era of wars, confrontation and regional conflicts, to aggressions against nature, to the terror of hunger and poverty as well as to political terrorism.

That is our common goal and we can only reach it together.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, for the important statement he has just made.

Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting was suspended at 12.05 p.m. and resumed at 12.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 41

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): In this connection I have received a letter from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus requesting that the item be deferred to the forty-fourth session.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item to the forty-fourth session and to include this item in the provisional agenda of that session.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): This concludes our consideration of agenda item 41.

AGENDA ITEM 38 (continued)

FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): The Assembly will recall my announcement on Monday, 5 December, regarding observance of the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Keeping in mind the singular importance and significance of this observance, which explains the large number of delegations inscribed on the list of speakers, I have reviewed the matter. While maintaining and indeed stressing my appeal to delegations to keep their statements as brief as possible in view of the large number of speakers, I propose to the Assembly that we continue consideration of this item into a second meeting tomorrow. However, this would entail a decision by the Assembly to override paragraph 7 of resolution 42/131, by which it decided to devote one plenary meeting during the forty-third session to this celebration.

(The President)

May I take it that the Assembly decides to extend the celebration into a second meeting?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.