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Fifty-first Session

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Official Records

President: Mr. Razali Ismail (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 119 (continued)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (Article 19 of the Charter) (A/51/366/Add.3)

The President: I should like to draw the General Assembly's attention to document A/51/366/Add. 3. In a letter contained in that document, the Secretary-General informs me that, since the issuance of his communications dated 17 and 20 September and 2 October 1996, the Gambia has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

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

It was so decided.

Agenda item 10

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/1)

The President: Before calling on the first speaker, I would like to propose, if there is no objection, that the list

of speakers in the debate on this item be closed at 12 noon today.

It was so decided.

Mr. Marrero (United States of America): The fifty-first General Assembly's general debate has ended. The world's great leaders have spoken. They were not always in agreement. We heard significant differences of views on important issues. But we also heard expressed a strong sense of commitment to the United Nations, a sense of commitment that will be critical as we begin the work of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

In this connection, my Government welcomes this opportunity to address the General Assembly on the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization. This document may be likened to an annual report to shareholders. Through it, we can assess the performance of our venture. The report is extensive. Among the messages that come through its 151 pages are how far-reaching the scope of the Organization's activities is now, how much it is attempting to do for so many, how complex its structure has become to do its work. It points to how much has been achieved, and how much there is for us to do. But the report's ambition must be viewed against the backdrop of a critical reality: the limited resources available to tackle so vast an agenda. This reality constitutes the driving force for what many of us have been saying more and more firmly: We must reform the United Nations. We must prepare it for the twenty-first century. We must strip from our texts the

rhetoric of the past and from our practices inefficiency and waste. We must speak the language of the future and accompany our words with deeds. And we must accomplish these tasks together.

In the years since the end of the cold war, we have worked together in these precincts to promote cooperative security, foster democracy and encourage sustainable development. From the speeches we heard in the general debate we can proudly conclude that throughout the world democracy has become the preferred system of government; one-time opponents of human rights are now advocates and those who were once victims of repressive regimes today sit as ministers of Government; free-market capitalism has overtaken socialist management as the economic model of choice; “ecologically sustainable” is the watchword of our development strategies. We have come a long way. Our march towards a better future for all passes along a trail that our predecessors have blazed. For the future, for the United Nations of the twenty-first century, we must expand that trail into a road, widen it and pave it. It must be broad enough that all mankind may travel along it to brighter days ahead.

It is for the United Nations of the future to set out the signposts along that road. It is for all of us, working together as the United Nations, to make the way safe for all people as they pass through communities free of drugs and thugs, liberated from the horrors of drought, hunger and noxious diseases. We want to be able to walk that road with welcome companions, freely moving about for business or pleasure. We want to work together with others to put an end to the journeys born of mayhem and slaughter.

For the United Nations to be the effective partner we need, its penchant for being all things to all people must be constrained. Diffuse programmes and projects do not yield positive results. Instead, they generate waste, over-extension and budgets that fund little subprogrammes with big goals and no results.

To my delegation, the reform our Organization needs will move the programme budget from a catalogue of current aspirations to a focused set of deliverable products. Our tolerance of ineffectual programmes is a price we collectively can no longer afford to pay. Symbolic programmes, incoherent structure, and wasteful personnel practices are a tax on the scarce resources we collectively are able to invest in the United Nations. They are a tax on the credibility of collective efforts. They are a tax that must be cut.

The Secretary-General’s report on the work of the Organization addresses the need for organizational renewal and reform. The process has begun; it must gain added momentum. From the general debate we conclude that there is broad international support for norms and robust action with regard to the treatment of refugees, sustainable development, humanitarian security, international crime and punishment, population management, human rights and intrusive inspections of weapons of mass destruction.

We see as we look towards the twenty-first century the growth of an international society guided by rules, given to self-help and able to live in peace. We seek through our reform initiatives to energize the United Nations in ways that push the growth of this civil international society so that the peace and security we strive to build will benefit all and so that its preservation will be in the interest of all.

My delegation has reflected upon efforts under way to reform our United Nations. We view reform as the process that will allow the United Nations to be all we dreamt it could be. These dreams should serve to nurture our thoughts. We must exercise our minds towards giving them reality. That is the duty of the membership. We must leave to the Secretariat the management of the efforts under way. There can be no progress unless the Secretary-General is encouraged to exercise his prerogatives as chief administrative officer. We are firmly committed to the view that the Secretariat can be accountable without being micromanaged. Elaborating a rational set of priorities requires all our time and energy. We cannot afford the waste of doing the work others are better placed to do.

We have already spelled out the specifics of our reform proposals. It is a rich menu. We have shared it with all our colleagues. Our commitment to it has not changed. We have heard the ideas colleagues have put forward. We think we know their minds on the issues. There is sufficient agreement to move the process forward, for agreements to be reached and reforms adopted. To this end, we look forward to the continuation of the work of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. Much was achieved in the past year, for which we are grateful to the co-Chairs. Now is the time to get to the specifics.

Reform will permit the United Nations to make better use of the resources Member States make available

to it. Reform also will encourage Member States to come forward with needed moneys. In this regard, my Government is proud to report to the General Assembly that in the weeks ahead we will be able to transfer to the United Nations significant funds, enough to preserve our status as the major contributor. But fundamental issues about financing remain. We believe that the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations has made progress. We look forward to a collective decision to put in place a more equitable scale of assessments. We agree that it is not prudent for the Organization to be overly dependent on the contributions of one Member State.

Last year, we collectively capped the United Nations regular budget. This autumn, we will be joining others in urging the adoption of a zero-growth budget outline for the next biennium. Fiscal responsibility has served to encourage efficiency. We must join together to preserve what we have gained. We must stay the course. Limiting ourselves in this way is not easy, but success would set us firmly on the road towards an affordable future.

The delegation of the United States looks forward to working with colleagues on these and other matters this year and requests that this agenda item remain open. Our efforts in the General Assembly should be aimed at advancing the goals of security, prosperity and peace that are central to the United Nations purpose.

Mr. Deineko (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): On instructions from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, it is my honour to read out the text of his statement to the General Assembly.

“The Russian delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for his annual report on the work of the Organization. We consider it, on the whole, to be a cogent and detailed document reflecting the United Nations achievements and shortcomings against a background of radical transformations in the world and in the context of profound reforms taking place in the Organization. We believe, however, that the political, economic and other priorities of the United Nations for the coming year could have been set forth in a more precise way.

“The transformation of the world into a multipolar one increases the importance of the United Nations as a single universal centre for coordinating the activities of States. The Organization’s

effectiveness should be guaranteed by consistent support, not subject to conjunctural fluctuations, to be provided by Member States as well as by non-selective compliance with their political and financial obligations under the United Nations Charter.

“We appreciate the measures taken by the Secretary-General, in contact with the Security Council, to strengthen United Nations potential in the area of peacekeeping. We support the warning expressed in the report against blurring the three distinct areas of authority in this field, which have proved their value, namely, the political direction given by the Security Council, the executive direction for which the Secretary-General is responsible, and the command in the field entrusted to chiefs of peacemaking missions.

“Russia fully supports the Secretary-General’s appeal for closer cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the areas of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping. The report objectively reflects the peacemaking role of Russia in solving the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict and in advancing the peace process in Tajikistan and Nagorny Karabakh, as well as the United Nations contribution to the settlement of conflicts in the region of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). We are convinced that the United Nations contribution to those efforts can and should be greater and include a wider peacemaking presence, providing financial as well as moral and political support to peacekeeping operations conducted under CIS auspices.

“The report contains sections on the situation in Afghanistan that are particularly relevant in the light of recent dramatic developments there. It is primarily an appeal to all Afghan parties immediately to cease hostilities and to have recourse unconditionally to peaceful dialogue. The leaders of five CIS States, at their recent meeting in Almaty, have made similar proposals.

“An important stage has been reached in the settlement in Bosnia. The elections held there and the complete lifting by the Security Council of economic sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republika Srpska were a landmark in the development of the so-called Yugo-crisis and strengthened the peace process. We

believe that in the near future the long-overdue decision will be taken on the resumption of Yugoslavia's participation in the work of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and other international bodies. That is an indispensable step that will contribute to the continuation of the peace process and enhance the prestige of the United Nations itself.

"We welcome United Nations efforts to support the political settlement in the Middle East. Recent events there have clearly indicated that the longer the artificial pause in the peace process goes on, the graver becomes the danger of returning to confrontation. The implementation of all the agreements already concluded and the continuation of the negotiations in all areas, on the basis of the land-for-peace principle, are the only way to move forward.

"The assessments given in the report with regard to the situation in the hot spots in Africa cannot fail to be of grave concern. Russia supports the efforts of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the subregional organizations to promote peace and stability in Africa.

"We fully support the Secretary-General's appeal to all States to adhere to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to take steps to ratify it as soon as possible so that it can enter into force.

"At the same time, we share the concern of the Secretary-General with regard to the threat still posed by the vast stocks of fissile material. As the report points out, the implementation of the agreements reached by the 8 States at the April 1996 Moscow Summit on Nuclear Safety and Security will help resolve this and other problems relating to nuclear safety and security.

"The Secretary-General has rightly and repeatedly focused attention on the difficult financial situation of the Organization. The crux of the crisis is in the failure of Member States to pay assessed contributions and, primarily, in a unilateral withholding of payments for political reasons. We share the view of the Secretary-General that the next task is to resolve the problem of payments by all States of current contributions and payment of arrears. Russia, for its part, despite our well known domestic difficulties, has already paid more than \$210 million to the United Nations this year, which exceeds by far

the contributions it was assessed for this period. Our payments will be continued in accordance with the previously announced decisions of the President and the Government of the Russian Federation.

"It is good that the Secretary-General should emphasize the idea we have long advocated; the long-term solution of the United Nations financing problems, which lies in developing a new scale of assessments on which all Member States can rely. We intend to press for such a solution within the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations.

"We support the Secretary-General's proposal to make the United Nations budgetary review process simpler and more flexible, thereby turning it into a more effective instrument for both Member States and the Secretariat.

"The report's assessments of the performance of the United Nations economic units show convincingly enough the real and important role played by the United Nations in the existing system of multilateral institutions. At the same time, the report unfortunately fails fully and vividly to demonstrate the comparative advantages of the United Nations in that sphere. There is virtually no analysis of the effectiveness of such activities, just as there are no proposals to strengthen coordination in the economic sector, which is justly criticized in intergovernmental negotiations for duplication and parallelism in the work of its units, for an uncoordinated approach and for inertia regarding reform. We hope that in his next report on the work of the Organization the Secretary-General will correct those omissions.

"We would like to see the report contain not merely examples but also specific assessments of the pluses and minuses of United Nations cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, research institutes, the private sector and other partners.

"At the same time, there is an interesting presentation of the objectives and the potential of important joint initiatives launched under the auspices of the United Nations in recent years, among them the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the Global Environment Facility, the

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests.

“We found useful the information given on the work done under the programme implemented in the interests of economies in transition by the United Nations Statistics Bureau, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and so on.

“The report notes that activities performed by the operational funds and programmes to promote environmentally sustainable development targeted towards human needs are affected because donor countries are reducing their financing. This naturally raises a concern and requires an adequate response by the international community.

“There is every reason for priority to be given the humanitarian area, which the Secretary-General pinpoints in his report, and in particular to his call to pay more attention to crises in Africa, where the scale of human suffering is incommensurate with the humanitarian aid provided.

“A continuous link to be assured between the provision of aid and recovery and development, especially in the post-conflict period, still remains high on the agenda. We would like to see effect given soon to the useful steps initiated by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, namely the introduction of the Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS) and the Relief Web. It is also vital to foster the ‘White Helmets’ initiative in the light of the early experience gained in operations in Angola, Armenia, Haiti, Jamaica and the Gaza Strip, as well as to make a rational use of military and civil-defence facilities to provide emergency assistance in the event of natural disasters.

“We note with satisfaction the importance, which is stressed in the report, of keeping under review issues relating to the promotion of the rule of international law and strengthening its role as the basis for a just world order. In particular, complete implementation of the programme of the United Nations Decade of International Law proclaimed by the General Assembly could contribute to that end.

The Russian initiative to hold a third peace conference is in keeping with that initiative.

“The world community is focusing its attention on issues of countering such new challenges to international security as terrorism, organized crime and drug addiction. Our delegation supports United Nations efforts in these priority areas and hopes that additional impetus to the development of an international legal basis for cooperation will be provided by the practical proposals submitted at this session, including the Russian proposal on drafting a convention against acts of nuclear terrorism.

“Human rights is one of the central issues on the United Nations agenda. We are pleased to note that the Secretary-General’s report lays particular emphasis not only on problems of the protection and settlement of refugees in emergency situations, but also on the preventive treatment of crises that create the refugees.

“The Secretary-General makes particular reference to the conclusion drawn by the regional conference on refugees in the post-Soviet territory, held in May of this year, on the need to prevent and curtail the phenomenon of stateless persons in order to prevent the emergence of potential refugees. That approach, with its emphasis on preventive measures, should be consistently implemented in practice, *inter alia*, during the discussion at this session of the human rights situation in countries that deprive a substantial part of their population of the opportunity to obtain citizenship and to exercise many other generally recognized human rights.

“We agree with the assessment of the role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, including aspects concerning the reform of the Organization’s human rights machinery. At the same time, proposals to reform United Nations activities in that area should, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions, be first discussed in a working group of the Third Committee and implemented in strict compliance with and on the basis of the decisions of the Organization’s Member States.

“In conclusion, I would like to point out that we, along with a number of other delegations, believe it useful that the Secretary-General should introduce his report on the work of the Organization

orally. The doubts raised in this regard by some representatives do not seem to us to be justified. We are convinced that one of the most important policy documents of the Organization should be introduced personally by a statement by the Secretary-General himself. That practice could be instituted as early as the next session."

Mr. Valle (Brazil): Sir, it is with great satisfaction that I speak under your presidency to present Brazil's observations on this year's report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization.

As usual, the annual report comprises both a comprehensive presentation of information on the work of the United Nations in its varied fields of activity and more interpretative formulations on where we are coming from and where we may be heading. We commend the Secretary-General for his sustained effort during the past five years to present us with as detailed material as possible on the full scope of the Organization's mandate, while sharing with us his many perceptions on the underlying currents at play and on possible ways to deal with them.

The year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization was one of justified commemoration. As an original signatory of the United Nations Charter, Brazil was among the delegations that partook in the celebrations with a sense of pride in the Organization's past accomplishments and with high hopes for the future. The Secretary-General has chosen the heading "Renewal and Reform" to introduce the period covered in this, his fifth report. This is indeed the mood that pervaded my own delegation's involvement in the work of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Our participation in the General Assembly Working Groups that are grappling with the elaboration of a blueprint for a better and more efficient United Nations is motivated, in particular, by a genuine belief in the Organization's capacity to overcome the technical and political obstacles on the path to reform. However, as indicated very straightforwardly in the statement in support of renewing multilateralism, issued in New York on 25 September 1996 by 16 Heads of State or Government, my own among them, "the hopes we shared have not been fulfilled." (*A/51/408, annex, p. 2*)

In spite of the eloquent rhetoric in favour of multilateralism which we were offered last year, there remains a widening gap between the international cooperation we have and the one we need, as the 16 countries very aptly stated in document A/51/408. Thus, a

review of the report on the activity of the past year cannot, unfortunately, be an exercise in self-congratulation. We agree with the Secretary-General when he points out that reform is an ongoing process. But conditions for this ongoing process must improve if it is to move forward at a sufficiently steady pace to keep other less encouraging tendencies at bay.

The Secretariat, Member States and non-governmental organizations all have a role to play in helping improve conditions, and special leadership will continue to be expected from those whose capacity to lead is the basis for their special rights and obligations.

The Secretary-General has set forth three guidelines for our future endeavours in the United Nations that are the pillars of Brazil's own foreign policy: peace, development and democratization. We have consistently underlined the desirability of establishing a strong, mutually reinforcing relationship between peace and development, and we remain convinced of the relevance of this interlinkage to the contemporary international agenda.

Three decades ago, Ambassador Araujo Castro coined a three-word syllabus for the United Nations of his time: disarmament, development and decolonization. Two years ago the Brazilian Minister of External Relations adapted this motto for an Organization which had all but disposed of the last remnants of colonialism, to read: democracy, development and disarmament.

While we are fundamentally in harmony with the Secretary-General's triad, I would like to elaborate on each of its constituents. It is not out of some fortuitous attachment to the letter "D" that we have in the past concentrated on the importance of disarmament for the promotion of global peace and security. Until quite recently, the tensions generated by rivalry among the most heavily armed Powers made any other security concerns seem secondary in the view of those which, like my own country, were among the non-nuclear and less-armed Powers. The nuclear threat may receive less attention today, but it has not disappeared.

Brazil agrees with the Secretary-General's assessment of the historic significance of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We also support the Secretary-General's call for the nuclear-weapon States to reduce their arsenals further, in line with the recommendations of the Canberra Commission. We take note with particular satisfaction that

the southern hemisphere and certain adjacent areas to the north of the Equator have become nuclear-weapon-free by virtue of the successful conclusion of negotiations that led to the opening for signature of the Pelindaba and Bangkok Treaties.

As a party to the chemical-weapons Convention, we urge the two declared chemical Powers to expedite their ratification of that important Treaty. Moreover, while the international community works towards the elimination of anti-personnel landmines, we have unilaterally undertaken to declare a moratorium on the export of landmines.

The possibilities opened up by a greater degree of cooperation among the five permanent members of the Security Council following the Gulf war resulted in intensified activity by the Council in facing a new set of challenges to prevent, control and resolve conflicts. A worrisome by-product of such activity, however, has been the blurring of the distinction between the peaceful settlement of disputes on the one hand, and coercion on the other. The tendency to favour military action to the detriment of diplomacy is not one that my delegation is ready to follow, and we would contend that it is not one that finds support in the Charter, which contemplates coercion only as a last resort.

The Secretary-General declares in his report that

“the activity we call ‘preventive diplomacy’ should be renamed ‘preventive action’”. (*A/51/I, para. 652*)

If “action” in this context were understood as measures in favour of social and economic development or humanitarian assistance, we might not feel any unease. We would still have doubts, however, about the wisdom of this remark. The word “action” appears once in Chapter VI of the Charter, although it figures eight times in Chapter VII, including in its title. Conflict prevention is clearly not a Chapter VII activity; as the Secretary-General correctly points out, it cannot be imposed on parties. It should not be confused, even if unintentionally, with enforcement measures, for by definition it is a realm for the exertion of non-coercive efforts through persuasion, negotiation, mediation, conciliation and arbitration; in short, it remains the realm of diplomacy.

As the representative of a country with a well-established diplomatic tradition, I would like to emphasize Brazil’s commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes and its rejection of coercion except as a last resort and in the strictest conformity with the Charter. Diplomacy

remains as relevant today as when the nation-State first made its appearance. To suggest otherwise would seem foolhardy in an environment where conceptual confusion is already rampant.

Admittedly, many of the crises brewing today defy the Organization’s capacity to react. But the lesson we should derive from the post-Gulf-War years in preventing, controlling and resolving a new generation of conflicts is that the United Nations can be most effective when it finds the means to carry out its work impartially, and that it tends to lose credibility when it does not.

The Secretary-General’s report highlights the importance of the cycle of international conferences of the 1990s in the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the United Nations in the social and economic spheres. We would like to be able to share in his assessment that they are producing concrete and far-reaching results, and shall continue to do our utmost for that to be the case. On the other hand, we find it premature to speak of “Implementing an Agenda for Development” (*A/51/I, part III A*), when its contents have yet to be satisfactorily formulated and adopted. We agree, nevertheless, with the emphasis placed by the Secretary-General on the need to preserve the central position of the United Nations in international cooperation for development, especially in the context of declining flows of official development assistance from the developed countries.

Having spoken of the continued relevance of disarmament and diplomacy for the promotion of peace, and having spoken of the pressing need for strengthening the Organization’s role in the promotion of development, I would like to conclude with a word on democracy.

A striking feature of both the General Assembly’s and the Security Council’s recent activity is the general trend towards consensus-building, and towards unanimously adopted decisions. We welcome this trend to the extent that it might be seen as a reflection of Member States’ wide-ranging commonality of views in pursuing shared objectives. A true and vigorous democracy, however, is more often than not marked by the existence of a plurality of dissenting voices. We are convinced that in these times of renewal and reform, the main bodies of the United Nations can only stand to gain from democratically expressed pluralism. With the preservation of multilateralism at stake and its strengthening still beyond our grasp, we must take full advantage of the possibilities offered by this universal forum to forward democracy, development and peace.

Mr. Turbay (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement to express my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. Your knowledge and experience will contribute greatly to the success of our work at the present session. I wish also to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, for his extremely valuable work during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

I would like also to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, on behalf of the Non-aligned Movement, for his comprehensive report, contained in document A/51/1, and for his initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization and its Secretariat.

It would not be possible to address in a single statement all the topics contained in the report before us. However, without attempting to address the specific contents of the report, let me state at the very outset that the role of the United Nations, including in particular that of the General Assembly, in promoting economic growth and development must be strengthened. In that regard, it is very important that the Organization place development at the top of its agenda. We therefore believe that development should have a separate chapter in the report of the Secretary-General, because development is an imperative, a goal, a right and, most important, the foundation of peace.

I would also like to make specific comments on what the Joint Coordinating Committee stated in the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. First, given the nature and scope of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, it would be very useful to prepare an executive summary covering the most important issues contained in the report.

Secondly, the report should be discussed in plenary meeting immediately after the general debate, which could provide an opportunity to assess the manner and extent in which General Assembly mandates have been implemented by the Secretariat. It is the prerogative of Member States to establish priorities. It is they, based on those priorities and through the General Assembly, that give specific mandates.

Thirdly, consideration of the report should therefore entail an in-depth analysis of its contents. As a result of this, appropriate concrete action should be taken on the report. Hence, we need a more suitable way of considering the report, in addition to the existing debate. This kind of

analysis would also provide an opportunity for the General Assembly to refer certain issues of the report to the Main Committees whenever the issues in a given section require specialized analysis.

Fourthly, the report should be submitted at an early stage and should be available to all Member States in all the official languages of the Organization, in a timely manner.

Mr. de Silva (Sri Lanka): We thank the Secretary-General for his detailed report dealing with various facets of the Organization's work, which lays particular emphasis on reform, the establishment of peace, conflict-prevention and some aspects of development. Following the wide-ranging discussions and in-depth analysis carried out at the fiftieth-anniversary session concerning the renewal of the United Nations, Member States now have a better vantage point from which to assess the work of the Organization. The report deals with a set of complex political, security and development problems encompassing a broad range of thematic issues, as well as with ongoing and past situations. The report seeks to encapsulate, in succinct form, analyses and assessments related to this complex web of national, regional and global issues. This is clearly no easy task, and could even result in oversimplification. I shall revert to this later in my statement.

Nevertheless, there is much substance in the report that will provide Member States with source material for discussion and debate in the Assembly. A thoroughgoing debate is necessary so that sound intergovernmental policy can emerge from our exchange of views. We do not wish to go into details about the themes or sectors that are dealt with in the report, as we hope to make more specific comments and suggestions under the individual agenda items and in the Committees concerned. Our observations will be confined to general remarks concerning the overall thrust of the report, while emphasizing certain aspects that are of particular interest to my Government.

As the report testifies, the United Nations has scored some successes, suffered some failures and faces an uncertain financial future. The initial groundswell of optimism that was generated at the end of the cold war has now given way to a sober pragmatism and a realistic appreciation of what the United Nations can do and what its Members are willing and able to do in promoting peace, development and security within and between States. The related reality is that the United Nations can

do what its Member States empower it to do. Naturally, it can do no more and no less. Whilst the Secretary-General's report captures this sense of pragmatism, we feel that more attention needs to be paid to the clear policy guidelines laid down by intergovernmental bodies than to the Secretariat's interpretation of certain concepts, whether they relate to "An Agenda for Peace" or to an Agenda for Development. The representative of Colombia made this point very cogently just now when he spoke as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We agree with the Secretary-General's conclusion that development and democratization themselves will be the most effective means of conflict prevention. We are happy to note that the Secretary-General remains committed to ensuring that however urgent peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance efforts may be, they should not detract from long-term efforts for development and human progress. While this sounds axiomatic, the developing countries have yet to see more specific action to translate this ideal into reality. Underdevelopment often determines the factors and conditions under which a conflict emerges. Economic disparity, social injustice and abuse of rights are the seminal causes of conflict.

In an era of diminishing multilateral development budgets, the United Nations has an indispensable role to play as catalyst, both in the macroeconomic policy area and in the operational spheres, to promote growth and development worldwide. We therefore agree with the Secretary-General that the United Nations has to redouble its efforts to forge an international consensus on a new rationale and framework for development cooperation. We would like to emphasize in that regard the developing countries' concern and disappointment that work on an Agenda for Development still remains in the realm of debate. The development agenda faces an uncertain financial future, as is the case with the United Nations itself.

The important international consensus that was embodied in Agenda 21 at Rio and in the outcome of the first World Social Summit, held at Copenhagen, promised so much, but delivered so little in terms of resource commitments and tangible benefits to the needy in the developing world. Such failures do not represent sound measures to build confidence about future prospects, but rather indicate the yawning gulf between expectation and fulfilment. We look forward to next year's review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, but we fear that a mere reiteration of objectives without corresponding

resource commitments will be of little or no use. More focused analysis on this score would have been useful.

Within the multilateral system of the United Nations, development issues must be freed from the complex political issues of conflict prevention. The development of an integrated approach to conflict prevention and to development may be a conceptually challenging task. This should not lead to a situation where development issues are considered only in the context of overall United Nations efforts in preventive diplomacy, humanitarian action and human rights. These are parallel processes that must go hand in hand. Situations need to be handled on a case-by-case basis. It is difficult to reduce these complex matters to one thematic exercise in which a range of complicated situations are synthesized into one prescription for preventing or resolving conflicts, or for building peace. Whilst integration of United Nations activities might be desirable in certain situations, delinking could be helpful in other situations. Whether in development, in conflict prevention or in humanitarian assistance, each situation has its own dynamics, characteristics, peculiarities and sensitivities. These need to be borne in mind in prescribing thematic solutions to various situations, including those described in Secretary-General's report. The broad-brush approach contained in the report, we hope, is only for the purpose of presentation and does not represent a departure from the well known, accepted United Nations policy of treating various situations on a case-by-case basis, a policy underlined in resolutions 47/120 and 46/182, which deal with United Nations preventive diplomacy policy and with policies on humanitarian assistance.

There are a few aspects of Secretary-General's report that we would like to comment on in the light of my general observations, as these have implications both for Charter principles relating to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States and for the principles and guidelines relevant to United Nations policy on preventive diplomacy, which were painstakingly negotiated by Member States and incorporated into a series of General Assembly resolutions following the Secretary-General's report "An Agenda for Peace".

The Secretary-General's report this year refers to the

"forthcoming availability to the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations of the Humanitarian Early Warning System database developed and maintained by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs". (*A/51/1, para. 645*)

While this could be a useful information tool it is essential and vital that Member States be fully informed of its contents and of the manner in which it is proposed that this database be used.

It is presumed that Member States would have access to this database, not only to make it more comprehensive and authentic, but also so that they will be informed of the substance of the system in order to contribute to possible response strategies to deal with such humanitarian emergencies. Regular consultations with Member States in general and with the countries which are the subject of such databases in particular would be essential. This is stipulated in the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly concerning the preventive-diplomacy policies of the United Nations. We would accordingly urge the Secretariat and the relevant United Nations agencies to initiate and maintain regular consultations with the Member States concerned in regard to the compilation of this database. It is essential that the output of any such data base is also shared with the Member States concerned in order to be consistent with Charter principles as well as to ensure transparency and that any action proposed would be undertaken only with the full prior knowledge and consent of the Member State concerned. The United Nations now has sufficient experience in preventive diplomacy to realize that without such interaction the desired result cannot be achieved. Member States would expect the Secretariat to disseminate more information concerning such mechanisms, as was required by resolution 47/120.

We have noted the observations contained in the report concerning the transformation of certain concepts, such as preventive diplomacy, preventive action and the evolving concept of peacemaking. As the Secretary-General has pointed out, the evolution of the conceptual basis as well as operational activities through the lessons learned from United Nations peacekeeping and peacemaking experience elsewhere is indeed a natural and desirable phenomenon. However, as in the case of the new concepts that were brought forward in the Secretary-General's report entitled "An Agenda for Peace", these evolving concepts also require refinement and constant consultations and discussions with the Member States concerned.

We welcome the Secretary-General's intention in this regard to have regular studies and analysis in the form of "lessons-learned studies" (A/51/1, *para.* 553), which will be undertaken by the Secretariat in the spheres of humanitarian activities and preventive diplomacy. We earnestly hope that these studies will be made available for intergovernmental discussion at the United Nations, so that Member States are

kept fully aware of evolving concepts as they relate to operational realities.

It is impossible to overemphasize the need for constant consultations with Member States, as required by resolutions 47/120 and 46/182, in order to ensure that the actions, reports and programme delivery of the United Nations remain consistent with the intergovernmental policies laid down by the General Assembly. There is also a need for the United Nations, particularly those agencies operating at the country level, to submit up-to-date and accurate information to Headquarters concerning the situation in a given country. Here again, consultations by the United Nations, both at the country level and at the Headquarters level, is of utmost importance not only for the projection of accurate information, but, more important, for a correct assessment of very complex situations that can otherwise be misinterpreted or misunderstood by various interest groups.

With regard to my own country, Sri Lanka, we were compelled to bring to the Secretary-General's notice certain inaccuracies and some gross oversimplifications which crept into the report. This, we believe, was basically due to the lack of consultations with the Government, either at the field level or at the Headquarters level, before information was digested and presented for publication. Certain facts presented were clearly obsolete and outdated, and some of the language used was misleading and ill-considered, having implications for such important principles as territorial integrity, sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of a Member State. The Government of Sri Lanka has invited a number of United Nations agencies to work in the country in continuation of our long-standing development cooperation relationship with the United Nations. In the present context of terrorist-initiated violence in some parts of Sri Lanka, these agencies have also been requested to perform certain humanitarian functions. The Government values this cooperation, but would very much like these activities to be consistent with accepted principles relating to United Nations functions in the field of humanitarian affairs and economic and social development. What has been set out in the report is clearly deficient in accuracy and obsolete in fact. I do not wish to go into detail, as we have circulated a document (A/51/398) putting forward the correct position with regard to the situation referred to in Secretary-General's report.

The point I wish to reiterate is that for the Secretary-General's report to be a valuable tool for

intergovernmental discussion it should contain information which is up to date and accurate. I regret to state that the section on Sri Lanka in the Secretary-General's report was lacking in both respects. We hope that the Governments concerned will be consulted before future reports are prepared in order to avoid such shortcomings.

There may be editorial difficulties in formulating a global report of this nature that touches upon a variety of complex situations in various countries around the world. It is nevertheless important that accuracy and comprehensiveness be ensured in the Secretary-General's report since Member States cannot take sound decisions based on partial information couched in ill-considered language. The only way that such accuracy and credibility can be achieved is to consult the Governments concerned before such pronouncements are issued, so that the risk of oversimplifying complex situations merely for the sake of the report's thematic presentation can be eliminated or minimized.

Justice is not done to a report of this complexity and comprehensiveness by the present practice of allotting it an all too brief one-day discussion in the General Assembly. We would appreciate it if this comprehensive report were made available to Member States sufficiently well in advance of the debate in the Assembly, so that delegations and indeed capitals can have a reasonable time, at least some days, before the report is discussed so that it can be given the attention and the seriousness that it deserves. We thank the Secretariat for making available this year's report in advance, compared to last year, when the report was issued on the eve of the general debate.

We share the view that the General Assembly should perhaps think in terms of considering specific ways of giving more detailed consideration to the Secretary-General's report, either through existing Committee structures or through a mechanism of the Assembly to be agreed upon after consultations by its President. Given the overall policy orientation of the report and its high political content, it is important that the General Assembly itself consider the report in greater detail than is possible in a one-day discussion in plenary meeting, as has hitherto been the practice.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the Secretary-General once again for making available the report in advance this year, and would urge him to continue to adhere to that useful practice. More important, we look forward to more intensive and regular consultations by Headquarters as well as by United Nations agencies with

the Member States concerned with regard to the report's projection of various country situations, in order to make this process of interaction more effective, more accurate and more meaningful.

Mr. Agam (Malaysia): The Malaysian delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization, contained in document A/51/1. As the report is a long and comprehensive one, I do not intend to make an extensive and elaborate commentary, but merely to touch on a few salient points.

My delegation notes with concern the Secretary-General's observation about a

"diminished willingness to engage the critical issues on the international agenda through the United Nations". (*A/51/1, para. 3*)

My delegation hopes that this is not indicative of a lack of commitment to the United Nations process. In their statements to the Assembly, national delegations all pointed to the global challenges that await the United Nations. There was also much emphasis on the need for a concerted effort towards invigorating the United Nations. If we are to live up to these lofty hopes and expectations, there should be an increased rather than a diminished willingness to be engaged in the multilateral process of the United Nations, thereby reinforcing the centrality of the role of this Organization.

The report also touched on several reforms and reorganization measures undertaken by the Secretary-General in respect of the Secretariat. My delegation is supportive of these and strongly encourages the process. However, it is our hope that the reforms that have been undertaken or are being planned are not being carried out at the dictate of certain groups to ensure primacy of their narrow interests over the interests of the larger membership of the Organization.

In its section on coordinating a comprehensive strategy and strengthening administrative structures, the report included statistical details pertaining to the General Assembly, such as who attended and addressed the Assembly, the number of meetings held and the number of resolutions adopted. While we acknowledge that such details are helpful, it would have been even more useful to know the status of the implementation of those resolutions.

My delegation also notes that while the number of mandated reports prepared by the United Nations continues to increase, the Secretary-General also issued more than 270 other reports. It would have been useful if a thematic listing of these other reports had been given so as to provide an indication of the areas and the reasons why these additional reports were required.

Paragraph 50 of the report states that the Security Council has continued to rely on sanctions as a means of ensuring compliance by target States with relevant resolutions of the Council. Today, eight sanctions regimes are in place. The question of sanctions is a matter of the utmost seriousness and concern to Member States. My delegation feels strongly that sanctions should be resorted to with great caution, and carried out only when other peaceful options provided for in the Charter have proven to be inadequate. Sanctions should be carried out in strict conformity with the United Nations Charter, with clear objectives, with provision for regular review and with precise conditions under which they can be lifted. They should never, above all, be intended or allowed to be used as an instrument for promoting the narrow national interests of individual Member States.

In the area of disarmament, my delegation observes that while the Secretary-General's rather lengthy report notes important recent developments such as the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, it makes only cursory mention of the equally important advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat of use or the use of nuclear weapons. In the view of my delegation the advisory opinion was a major and positive development in the overall context of nuclear disarmament, not least because of the unanimous conclusion of the Court that

“there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control”. (A/51/I, para. 79)

At this session of the General Assembly, Malaysia and other like-minded countries are initiating a follow-up draft resolution pertaining to the advisory opinion of the Court.

On the question of ensuring an adequate financial base, it is indeed regrettable that the financial situation of the United Nations continues to be in a deplorable state. The non-payment by major contributors of assessments for the United Nations budget has forced the United Nations to resort to borrowing from its peacekeeping accounts, thereby resulting in a delay in payment to troop-contributing countries of expenses for troops and equipment. My delegation is concerned about the effect that this will have on the participation of Member States in future peacekeeping operations, especially on that of developing countries.

My delegation is also concerned with the report's bleak forecast that the United Nations will continue to face a worsening regular-budget situation due to a persistent negative cash flow. In this regard, we would urge Member States to honour their obligations, and pay their arrears from previous years and current contributions promptly and unconditionally.

On the issue of the ceiling for the scale of assessments for the regular budget in respect of a major contributor, the Secretary-General's proposal to decrease it from the present 25 per cent to 20 or 15 per cent is, in the view of my delegation, inconsistent not only with the principle of the capacity to pay and with Charter-mandated obligations, but also with the role and influence wielded by that major contributor. Further, such a proposal would unrealistically and unfairly impose an additional financial burden on other Member States, especially on those with a lesser capacity to pay.

As regards the Secretary-General's requirement for a simplified budgetary review process, my delegation is of the opinion that the current procedure is adequate as it provides a good mechanism of necessary checks and balances.

On an Agenda for Development, the report states that the Agenda has the potential to provide an important blueprint for international cooperation in years to come. Indeed, my delegation would go a step further. We cannot imagine a United Nations without an agenda for development, as there can be no peace and security without development. In this regard, my delegation supports the proposal just made by the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, that the issue of development be dealt with in a separate chapter of future reports of the Secretary-General. My delegation is concerned that the discussions on the Agenda for Development are not progressing as fast as we would like them to be. The Agenda should also be more action-oriented. My delegation would urge more determined efforts to see the Agenda through to its successful conclusion.

As stated in the report, collaboration and cooperation between multilateral organizations and other development partners, including the Bretton Woods institutions, has become more essential. This is to ensure that ideas and resources are utilized in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. In subscribing to this observation, my delegation would urge the multilateral organizations to ensure that such collaboration be fair and just, in view of the tendency of those institutions to impose conditions that are very often unfair.

The section that deals with the humanitarian imperative sets out a clear scenario of the challenges that the United Nations has to respond to. My delegation recognizes that the United Nations bears a tremendous responsibility in this humanitarian area, especially in making available the necessary human, material and financial resources. In this regard, my delegation calls upon the international community to continue its voluntary contributions to support global humanitarian efforts, so as to alleviate the suffering of those affected.

On the question of preventive diplomacy and peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building, in addition to my delegation's concern, expressed earlier, that peacekeeping activities have been hampered by the lack of financial resources due to the current financial crisis, I would also like to stress that these activities should be undertaken in strict conformity with the mandates given to the United Nations. Member States must provide clear guidelines with regard to the definitions, principles and ways and means for the implementation of activities related to preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building. My delegation would therefore urge that negotiations on preventive diplomacy,

peacemaking and post-conflict peace-building be completed as soon as possible.

In its concluding chapter, the report of the Secretary-General states, *inter alia*, that the end of the cold-war-era brought a new hope that the promise of the Charter of the United Nations could be renewed, and that an international system based on collective security, shared values and cooperative problem-solving could finally be achieved. This is a hope that Malaysia fully shares. However, if there are to be more than just pious hopes and expectations it is incumbent upon us as States Members of this Organization to play a constructive role in ensuring that the Organization will not only survive but thrive in the next 50 years and beyond. Therein lies the importance of the ongoing, indeed continuous, process of reform and restructuring of the United Nations system, a process that demands the fullest involvement and commitment from each and every Member of the Organization. It is a process to which the Malaysian delegation intends to contribute in the most useful and effective way we can.

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria): Since this is the first time I have addressed the General Assembly at this session, let me reiterate my Government's congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President. The first three weeks of our work have already shown that necessary reform in the working methods of the Assembly is indeed possible provided there is strong leadership of the kind you are providing.

The Secretary-General has presented us with a report that highlights the challenges to the Organization and the steps taken so far to meet them. It shows that the Organization is changing, and that this process is still far from complete. In this context, I should like to make the following main points.

Mr. Agathocleous (Cyprus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

First, an unbiased look at the report shows that far more useful and indeed essential work is done by the United Nations than is often assumed.

Secondly, the report focuses on emerging priorities in international cooperation, such as the Organization's role in the prevention and the peaceful settlement of armed conflicts and the threat posed by drugs and organized crime to international security.

Thirdly, the report also shows that the necessary reforms in the Secretariat are proceeding faster than our common efforts to adapt the intergovernmental machinery.

And finally, the report, as good as it is, is somewhat limited by its format. The concise presentation of the work done in the past year and the Secretary-General's analysis of the state of the Organization simply beg to be complemented with a forward-looking executive summary.

Before addressing these points in a little more detail I should like to stress what should be obvious to us all: Without a secure financial basis there can be no lasting reform. It may be effective in the short term to use financial pressure to get a reform process going. But it is counterproductive to force too many management resources to be used to achieve savings just to get us through the budget year. Of course, we should all be vigilant as to how our contributions are spent, and indeed we are. But it is our, the Member States', job, not the Secretariat's, to review and where necessary adapt the mandates, as well as to take a hard look at the forums we work in and the procedures we use on the intergovernmental level. These are political not managerial decisions, and we have to meet this obligation.

This is not a report by a useless organization. Nor is it by any stretch of the imagination the depiction of some kind of world government. It is a mirror of our common will, and sadly, in some areas — and not the least important ones — a mirror of the lack of it. For all its inevitable length, it gives us a sober and concise picture of the state of our common work. Gone is the optimism that pervaded us all, that the United Nations envisaged in the Charter would finally come into its own after the end of the cold war. However, we must not overemphasize this downward trend. There have been setbacks, certainly. But apart from the probably healthy realization that not all conflicts lend themselves to United Nations peacekeeping, it would seem that reverse budget creep has set in. Could it be that the countries shouldering the major part of contributions to the United Nations regular budget, peacekeeping budgets and voluntary contributions especially in the field of development see less of a reason for multilateral international cooperation? Has unrestrained belief in globalization replaced multilateralism? Is it not tempting to take a pick-and-choose approach, so much more easily explainable to national treasuries, and so much more useful to further narrow national interests? And would it then not be highly expedient to blame the Organization's real or perceived inadequacies in order to rationalize the

rejection of multilateral diplomacy? We hope that this trend will not continue.

The report itself provides many a good argument against this line of thought. Agreed, there are still some remnants of a bygone era, some intergovernmental and Secretariat structures of at best symbolic value to a limited number of Member States. And we all know that old habits die hard; we are much more prone to create a new committee than to dissolve one that has outlived its purpose. But we should be encouraged by the focus the Secretary-General has put on emerging priorities, particularly in the field of security in the broadest sense of the term. We welcome the growing acceptance of a broad definition of security as an acknowledgement of the interdependence of all the purposes and principles of the Charter. It also corresponds to our conviction that problems should be addressed at the proper level. Thus a better-focused United Nations has to deal with problems that cannot be resolved nationally or regionally.

We fully support the increasing emphasis on preventive diplomacy. While truly international conflicts are rare, we have seen that intranational conflicts can quickly lead to international problems. However successful a later peacekeeping operation might be, it is obviously preferable to make every effort to prevent the outbreak or to prevent the escalation of hostilities, limiting as much as possible the suffering, the human and material losses, and the resources involved.

The fight against illicit drugs and organized crime has long been taken to the international level by the perpetrators themselves. And a global approach is indeed needed, given that many manifestations of this scourge have their roots in post-conflict situations, in the lack of civil society, in lawlessness or in abject poverty. The United Nations combines what is appropriately called the unique legitimacy of its universal membership and its breadth of scope to address not only the manifestations but also the root causes of these international problems.

The Secretary-General rightly points out that the efforts of Member States to reform the intergovernmental machinery have not kept pace with reform on the Secretariat's side. I hope that this is a case of a half-full/half-empty glass and that in the many meetings of the reform Working Groups we have managed to lay the foundations for the hard decisions ahead. It is time to make decisions. We will not be able to find the perfect solution to all questions, but petty particular interests should not be in a position to block vital improvements

supported with near unanimity. While reform will have to remain on the Organization's agenda as a constant feature, the current major efforts to restructure and revitalize, to modernize and update the United Nations must now be brought to a conclusion. Any organization that becomes primarily inward-looking and constantly preoccupied with itself will be a sick organization.

The Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization is indeed an important document. It merits a profound debate of the kind we are having today in plenary meeting, but as many delegations stressed in the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, the document could benefit us even more if it were accompanied by a forward-looking executive summary, a point that has already been made today by the representative of Colombia, speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. To the extent possible, under the present format the Secretary-General has already included some future-oriented references here and there, for instance expanding on the clustering concept for the Secretariat structure in paragraph 1140. We encourage the Secretary-General to widen this approach to all suitable parts of the report. We would also welcome earlier publication of the report to allow Heads of delegations to refer to it in their statements in the general debate if they so wish, as well as an in-depth discussion of the report in plenary meeting immediately after the general debate. Although it may not correspond to the tradition of this House, we also feel that the General Assembly would benefit from the oral introduction of the report by the Secretary-General himself.

But our main goal has to be substantial progress on reform: first through intensive work within the committees of this General Assembly, and then later next year in the Working Groups once they resume their activities. I am confident that Ambassador Razali will ensure a coordinated and, perhaps, consolidated approach to this process. I would hope that the Secretary-General in his report to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly will then be able to record that we have done our homework.

Mr. Sevilla Siero (Nicaragua) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Secretary-General's report is a document of the utmost usefulness for Member States because its clarity allows us to familiarize ourselves with, examine, evaluate and comment on the various areas of the work of the United Nations over the last year. This document bears witness to the many and varied tasks the United Nations and the Secretary-General have undertaken to try to respond effectively to the many challenges and opportunities that

confront the Organization, and to fully uphold the principles of the Charter. It also reflects the direction of the Organization in this post-cold-war period.

Owing to the breadth of the report, it would be hard to imagine covering in a single statement the diverse range of important subjects it contains. Therefore, I will try to select points that my delegation feels have a major impact on our Organization's life.

I should note here that my delegation associates itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

In the introduction to his report, the Secretary-General calls attention to a paradox, saying that

"In the context of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the past year has brought a historic recommitment by Member States to the purposes and principles of their Organization ...

"The period covered in the pages of this annual report, has, however, also brought indications of a diminished willingness to engage the critical issues on the international agenda through the United Nations." (*A/51/I, paras. 2 and 3*)

So that States can correctly interpret these contentions, the Secretary-General stresses that

"Most notable among these indicators have been the ongoing financial crisis, which so dominated the first part of the year and remains a matter of urgent concern; the decline in peacekeeping activity, ... and a continuation of the dismaying downward trend in the level of resources made available for development." (*ibid., para. 3*)

Concerning the financial crisis, the Secretary-General points out that

"As at 31 July 1996, unpaid assessments exceeded \$3 billion. Of this amount, \$0.8 billion is for the regular budget and \$2.2 billion is for peacekeeping budgets". (*ibid., para. 184*)

In this crisis, which originated in the lack of payment by some Member States, we agree with what has been said previously by the Group of 77, that the crisis will continue until the major contributors regularize their payments. In this context, we are concerned about any

attempt to link the payment crisis to the scale of assessments as well as about the conditioning of the payment of assessments to the reform of the Organization or of the methodology governing the scale of assessments. We hope that the fulfilment of commitments made during the general debate will allow the Organization to largely overcome the effects of the crisis.

The financial reform under consideration in the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations should try to consider how to include fairer assessments approximating as closely as possible the real ability of each Member State to pay.

With respect to the reduction of peacekeeping operations, the Secretary-General reports that there were 67,269 troops deployed in July 1995, while by July 1996 this figure had fallen to 25,296, without a parallel reduction in the number of conflicts requiring the attention of the international community. That is to say, there was a substantial reduction of forces.

The Secretary-General also points out that, of the 16 peacekeeping operations currently deployed, most have extremely difficult missions because most current conflicts are intra-State conflicts being waged not only by regular armies but also by militias and civilians with poorly defined chains of command. These conflicts are sometimes marked by a breakdown in government institutions and an interruption of the rule of law.

Our delegation feels that one of the main purposes for which the United Nations was established — in accordance with paragraph 1 of Article 1 of the Charter — was

“To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace”.

To that end, the Organization must have sufficient resources to be able to act promptly in those situations in which it bears the primary responsibility. In this regard, the Secretary-General defines the lessons learned from peacekeeping operations. The first is that, when facing hostile action, every operation must deploy the strength necessary to achieve the tasks entrusted to it and to protect itself. Otherwise, the credibility of the Organization and the safety of its personnel will be jeopardized. Secondly, no instrument for peace and security can bring about a lasting peace without the political will of the parties to the conflict.

This has been fully demonstrated throughout history. Peace would not have been achieved in Central America if the parties to the conflicts had not agreed that it was best for each nation and for the Central American region as a whole. Thus, the root causes of the conflicts were addressed, and not merely their superficial manifestations. As the Secretary-General says, the political, economic, social and humanitarian causes of the armed conflicts were addressed.

We feel that the United Nations should increase its activities to prevent conflicts so as to ensure that they do not take place, thus requiring the Organization to devote resources to restoring peace. Unfortunately, many of these conflicts have taken place despite efforts to avoid them.

In paragraph 652 of his report, the Secretary-General states:

“I have come to the conclusion, however, that the activity we call ‘preventive diplomacy’ should be renamed ‘preventive action’. Diplomacy is certainly a well-tried means of preventing conflict. The United Nations experience in recent years has shown, however, that there are several other forms of action that can have a useful preventive effect: preventive deployment; preventive disarmament; preventive humanitarian action; and preventive peace-building, which can involve, with the consent of the Government or Governments concerned, a wide range of actions in the fields of good governance, human rights and economic and social development.” (*A/51/1, para. 652*)

In this context, I wish to stress my delegation’s support for the establishment of a United Nations rapid-reaction force, as has been proposed by a group of countries, including Nicaragua.

The Secretary-General tells us in his report that, despite the improvement of the current capacity of the United Nations to support development, the Organization has fewer and fewer resources available to it for this purpose. One of the main purposes of the United Nations, established in Article 1, paragraph 3 of the Charter is

“To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character”.

In other words, this is a matter of cooperation for development. However, in the international sphere,

development continues to be considered secondary to concerns about peace. These elements are inseparable, however, and supplement one another. There can be no peace without development, and vice versa. The United Nations must make greater efforts to ensure the foundations of a lasting peace through economic and social development, which requires our sustained attention.

In this context, we should recall that among the underlying causes of conflicts, mainly in the developing world, we almost always find poverty, illiteracy, poor health, lack of food, a deteriorating environment and so forth — in a word, a lack of development. Given this reality, assistance for development becomes preventive action, as the Secretary-General tells us. We are therefore concerned that last year the percentage of official development assistance declined and call on those States most able to do so to increase their cooperation with the developing countries of the South, and in particular with the least developed countries.

We should stress that, in this interdependent world, conflicts, no matter where they begin, affect the rest of the globe, and that the entire international community therefore has an obligation to try to prevent them.

The United Nations is an Organization with ongoing economic, social, cultural and humanitarian concerns of a global nature. Its work involves all human activities and that is why it cannot successfully fulfil its mandate or face its great challenges if Member States do not give it the necessary resources for carrying out the tasks entrusted to it. The strengthening of the structures of the United Nations should therefore be a permanent activity of the Organization and of all its members. In this context, our comments touch on the revitalization of the role of the General Assembly, given its competence in all areas dealt with by the Organization and especially because the principle of the sovereign equality of States takes on particular significance in this body.

Efforts to revitalize the functioning of the Assembly are being made by the diverse Working Groups addressing the most important aspects of the future of our Organization: the reform of the Security Council, the Agenda for Peace, the Agenda for Development, the financial situation of the United Nations and the strengthening of the United Nations system. My delegation will take the opportunity to comment on the work of these Groups on another occasion.

We are also pleased with the discussions underway to create a more efficient division of labour between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, which will help eliminate the duplication of work between these two main organs. Along these same lines, we urge the Security Council to continue attending to the desire of Member States for greater transparency in its deliberations and, accordingly, for more frequent public meetings.

On 10 September, the General Assembly adopted the text of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which has been signed here at United Nations Headquarters by many States, including Nicaragua. The Treaty contains a specific commitment on the part of nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States to achieve the final goal of a completely nuclear-free world. We strongly support the Secretary-General's appeal to all States to sign the Treaty and start the necessary national procedures to ratify it as quickly as possible so that it can quickly enter into force. We urge the United Nations and all its Member States to continue this trend of disarmament in order to achieve for all a world of peace and freedom, a world that is more secure, just, peaceful, tolerant and democratic.

In conclusion, I would like on behalf of my delegation to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for this analysis of events of the last year. We support his efforts to improve our Organization and to guarantee greater efficiency.

Mr. Henze (Germany): Let me start by thanking the Secretary-General and his collaborators for the report on the work of the Organization. This is the fifth report of its kind. My delegation welcomes it. The thorough and detailed report gives a true picture of the difficult work done over the past year. It accurately reflects the long and intensive agenda of the United Nations. The Organization is like a huge ship making its way through the high seas and fraught with a heavy load. The ship's destination is peace and well-being for all. The report proves how difficult and challenging it is to steer the right course. Sometimes the ship has to avoid areas of stormy weather, sometimes she has to go right through a storm.

The report shows clearly that our ship is not in good condition. It speaks of "urgent concerns" and

"indications of a diminished willingness to engage the critical issues on the international agenda"
(A/51/I, para. 3)

The introduction is headed by the right motto: Renewal and reform.

Some first emergency repair work was done during the fiftieth session: management reforms, efficiency measures, cost reductions. However, this is not enough. The repair work done so far is only the beginning. The basic groundwork is still missing. The ship is not fit for its ambitious objectives. It cannot even keep its course. Some would be content with fresh paint or with insufficient instruments which only allowed the ship to go around in circles. Let me repeat: such a reform would not be enough. The United Nations ship is badly in need of a complete structural and institutional overhaul.

How should this be done? Maritime traffic in our day is supported by modern instruments. But visual perception is still the easiest and most familiar method. On a crucial point on her route, our ship has passed a powerful lighthouse: the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. It sent strong and unambiguous signals that can still be seen: the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations. In this Declaration, Member States committed themselves to

“give to the twenty-first century a United Nations equipped, financed and structured to serve effectively the peoples in whose name it was established”.
(*resolution 50/6*)

Captains and crews who do not respect lighthouse signals normally risk their ship, often even their own lives. I believe that no Member State can afford to ignore the clear signals and warnings of the lighthouse.

The General Assembly, being the bridge of command of our ship, must now give the instructions that will determine the course and future shape of the ship. This is not the moment for more in-depth debates or for stalling for time. If we want to enable the ship to meet the challenges of the next century, we must stop formal discussions without conclusions and come to terms with our tasks. Long and numerous meetings — the report mentions an overall number of 265 — have been held in the various reform working groups of the General Assembly: on the Agenda for Development, on the financial situation of the United Nations, on the Agenda for Peace, on the strengthening of the United Nations system, and on reform of the Security Council. This is the framework for the ship's complete overhaul.

The direction now to follow is the effective overall institutional reform, consisting of, as the report says:

“improvements in the effectiveness and functioning of the principal organs; a better balance in the authority of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as envisioned in the Charter; and a streamlining of the subsidiary machinery”. (*ibid.*, para. 9)

No ship can navigate without fuel and provisions. Nobody disputes that the non-payment of dues by some Member States is a major problem undermining the work of the United Nations. But we also cannot ignore the need for a lasting solution to the financial crisis: the adaptation of the scale of assessment to reflect the changes in the economic and financial conditions of a number of Member countries. There is a proposal of the European Union to that effect which we are firmly attached to. In our view the time has come to start a very concrete discussion on the basis of precise figures before the lights in this building go out because the United Nations lacks the money to pay the bill. In that discussion we have to bear in mind one aspect among many other elements: there is a connection between the political will to play a role in the United Nations and the willingness to assume the corresponding share of the common financial burden.

Filling the tank with fuel will allow us to start the engine. But in order to be able to steer the right course we also need repair work on the command bridge and the engines: we have to reform the organs of the United Nations. The General Assembly is the command bridge of the Organization. To cope with stormy weather, it needs an agenda which aims at more substance and less form. The rather high number of reports to be submitted to the General Assembly is part of this question. The General Assembly needs a shorter and more meaningful agenda with fewer rather than more items. It needs an agenda which a normal permanent representative, and her or his collaborators, can oversee and handle in its entirety without the help of 20 or so experts. It needs to avoid duplication of work in the committees and the Plenary.

My delegation hopes that the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System will be successful in its work. The substantial voluntary contribution Germany has made to the trust fund will help to carry on the work of the Working Group during the fifty-first session. The Working Group is currently also dealing with the reform of the Secretariat. We note that a process of management

reform has been initiated which will, we hope, make the way the Secretariat is going about its work more effective and efficient. A key factor that has successfully contributed to this reform process has been the work of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). We are pleased that the concept of independent internal oversight is apparently taking root within the Secretariat. But more certainly needs to be done. Constructive efforts must be made to extend the OIOS concept to other agencies throughout the United Nations system, such as the funds and programmes and, eventually, the specialized agencies.

But any repair work that does not include an important engine of the Organization, the Security Council, will remain patchwork. The Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council has presented the most detailed and comprehensive report in its three years of deliberations. The report contains all the elements necessary for a genuine reform of the Security Council. It does not offer prefabricated solutions, but it is an excellent base for concrete negotiations and a clear indicator of the direction to take. Nine out of 10 of the new proposals of the report, which deal with the composition and size of the Security Council, support or do not exclude an enlargement in both categories of membership, permanent and non-permanent. Other important proposals refer to the working methods and procedures of the Security Council and its decision-making, including the veto. Germany has proposed a periodic review clause. It is now time to translate ideas and positions into action and real change. The outgoing President of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, Mr. Freitas do Amaral, has said:

“Member States ... must deliver. The world expects this. The issues cannot just be endlessly debated. There must be action, and there must be action soon.”
(*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 128th meeting, p. 7*)

I have nothing to add to these words.

Let me now deal with the destination of our ship. We remain firmly convinced that there will be no lasting peace and stability without sound economic and social development. Therefore, the reform process in the social and economic field of the United Nations remains a major task on our agenda. We continue to support adjustments in the institutional framework of the United Nations that reflect the new consensus on the priorities of development cooperation and serve these priorities in an efficient

manner. In a rapidly changing world only a simpler, more focused and more integrated organization will be responsive enough to serve the needs of its Members. Accelerating change in an increasingly interdependent world should not simply lead to an ever-growing number of institutions and mechanisms. Rather, strategically important priorities must be recognized and addressed in an effective and efficient manner. Progress has been made in this direction in the General Assembly, in the Economic and Social Council and in the funds and programmes, as well as in the Secretariat. The ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has enabled this important institution to refocus on its main contributions to the most pressing needs of development. Cooperation in the promotion of sustainable development between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions has become increasingly close.

We recognize the progress. However, further serious efforts and important steps are required in order to give credit to the central role of the United Nations in the cooperation for sustainable development. Let me mention some of them.

Together with the Secretary-General we will have to discuss measures to shape a streamlined, more coherent and responsive Secretariat to provide the most integrated and effective support possible to Member States and to the intergovernmental forums and to increase the effectiveness of operational activities at the country level. The European Union has made proposals in this regard and will further develop them in the near future.

A strengthened Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) should further improve the coordination between the various agencies active in development cooperation within the United Nations system, in particular in following up on the major United Nations conferences. We look forward to the results of the task forces established in this context. An improved interaction between this committee and the Economic and Social Council should become an important avenue for effective coordination between all parts of the United Nations development system. In this context we welcome and encourage the streamlining of the subsidiary structures of ACC.

The Agenda for Development should be finalized as soon as possible. It is not conducive to the impact of the Agenda and to the profile of the United Nations in development cooperation for this document to remain on

the negotiating table for too long and to be overtaken by events too often. The steps outlined in the resolutions on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the social, economic and related fields (in particular the latest resolution, 50/227) should be put into practice fully and soon, and become stepping stones on the way to a more focused and vigorous dialogue and to more relevant decision-making at the country level.

I do not want to leave the area of reform in the economic, social and related fields without emphasizing the special efforts required for the least developed countries and Africa. We welcome the results of the recent review of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, as well as the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa. This initiative should be taken up by all concerned through more concerted efforts on common priorities.

Economic and social development needs peace and stability. The conflicts over recent years have not only reversed the development in the countries and regions affected. They have also devastated the successes and results of development efforts and required billions of dollars for humanitarian assistance — money that could have been spent with long-lasting effects for the economic and social development of the conflict regions. Against this background, peacekeeping operations, preventive diplomacy and post-conflict peace-building must be further improved. This is why we attach particular importance to the successful completion of the work of the Informal Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on an Agenda for Peace. Substantial progress was able to be made during the last session, but two of the working groups still have to agree on a few remaining issues in a report.

Moreover, post-conflict peace-building rightly received particular attention in the Secretary-General's report. It is also a priority for my country. An international workshop in Berlin on the concept of and lessons learned from peace-building has produced a substantial and interesting report on how to win the peace. We would be glad to provide every interested delegation with a copy of this report.

The proliferation of arms — mostly small arms and light weapons, including landmines — in conflict areas is one of the most serious impediments to peace, according to the Secretary-General's report. The seven-point action programme presented by Minister Kinkel on anti-personnel mines is part of the many activities aiming at effectively reducing the harm caused by such mines. Germany also

pledges its full support to initiatives in the General Assembly, as well as in other forums, aimed at the final ban of these weapons. A joint resolution initiative by my country and others in the First Committee, focusing more generally on the need for practical disarmament measures to promote the consolidation of peace in areas that have suffered from conflict, is intended to be another step forward and to provide some new momentum for this Committee.

New momentum is needed in many areas. Let me in this context state once again how happy we are to see Ambassador Razali as captain on the bridge of command. We expect his expertise and steering hand to help all of us in getting through the heavy waters of our agenda.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me first to congratulate President Razali Ismail for the manner in which he is conducting this session.

I also extend our congratulations to the Secretary-General for his presentation of such a detailed and stimulating report on the work of the Organization. This document should be evaluated in the light of the "Supplement to 'An Agenda for Peace'" and "An Agenda for Development", as it shows the consistency and continuity of an intense effort that opens up horizons and shows us the path we must travel in order to reach those goals.

Reform and the financial situation were the dominant themes of the last session. The Working Group chaired by Ambassador Oscar de Rojas of Venezuela led to the adoption of resolution 50/227, which represented an important response to these matters. We agree with the Secretary-General that the implementation of this resolution will give new impulse to the reforms already underway.

We likewise value the progress made by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on an Agenda for Development. That forum allows States to debate frankly the new opportunities for cooperation in the area of development and to analyse the restructuring of the United Nations.

We are pleased with the results of the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The new work programme is more concentrated. The process begun in Cartagena

should be accompanied by the reform of UNCTAD's secretariat.

As the Secretary-General indicates, the deterioration of the financial situation is reaching unprecedented depths. We observe this situation with the greatest concern, as there can be no effectiveness without the prompt and unconditional meeting of financial responsibilities by Member States. The serious situation adds a heavy burden to the troop — and equipment — contributing countries. Countries like Argentina are experiencing significant delays in reimbursements for these expenditures.

We thank the Secretary-General for the efforts he made in the General Assembly's High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations. We will continue to work in that Group towards an agreement on the most adequate mechanisms for solving the crisis.

We regret the fact that, despite the Security Council's decision to hold more open meetings, such meetings have not occurred to the desired extent. It is necessary to continue to work for greater transparency in the Council's work. An example of our determination is the proposal on procedures and working methods we presented with New Zealand this year in the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform.

With the same goal of increasing transparency, Argentina promoted a mechanism for consultation and exchange of information between the Council and the troop-contributing countries. We were pleased that the Security Council adopted a presidential statement last March partially reflecting these concerns. We also thank the countries that worked for this achievement — namely New Zealand, Spain, Italy, Germany, Pakistan, Japan, the Netherlands, Honduras, Brazil and Chile. They reflect and represent a broad spectrum of what members of this Organization feel about the current work modalities of the Security Council.

We also urge a redoubling of efforts to bring the *Répertoire of the Practice of the Security Council* up to date. We know the financial obstacles this task would entail, but we are also aware that the valuable information contained in the *Répertoire* is of essential importance to the non-permanent members of the Council, parliaments and public opinion in general.

The implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action has resulted in progress towards the universal promotion of human rights.

We value the achievements of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ambassador José Ayala Lasso of Ecuador, and the treaty supervision bodies. His concern for democracy in the American hemisphere is supported.

We wish to thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for its efforts in 1996 on behalf the millions of refugees and internally displaced persons. The diverse nationalities of refugees and the great number of economic migrants who are displaced along with them makes the task of determining who is a refugee difficult. Case-by-case treatment should be given them, along with a close scrutiny of the situation in their countries of origin, without prejudice to the institution of the refugee. As for economic migrants, we feel that this category of persons also need international assistance.

We attach particular importance to the role played by the United Nations in the area of humanitarian assistance and the rebuilding of countries afflicted by emergencies and disasters.

Three years after the launching of the "White Helmets" initiative, we are pleased with the degree of successful implementation that has already been achieved. The projects being carried out in Gaza, Armenia, Haiti, Angola and Jamaica, as well as the financial and human support given by various countries, are among the best proofs of the viability of the initiative. Similarly, the participation of "White Helmets" in such varied activities as food distribution, electoral assistance, urban planning and humanitarian demining operations reflect the flexibility and demand for this type of mechanism. We are convinced that the "White Helmets" are now viable tools to help alleviate suffering caused by emergencies of the most varied type.

We therefore appeal, on the basis of this positive experience, for the organization of corps of "White Helmets" at the national level, thus providing the international community and the United Nations with additional sorely needed of emergency humanitarian assistance.

We agree with the Secretary-General when he tells us in "An Agenda for Peace" that it is better to prevent conflicts through early warning, preventive diplomacy

and — when necessary — preventive deployment than to employ large-scale political and military measures at a later date.

We recognize the achievements of the Departments of Political Affairs, Humanitarian Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations in working in greater coordination. As recently stated by Foreign Minister Di Tella before this General Assembly, peacekeeping operations are among the most effective tools in the world for averting violence. We therefore give our early and full support for these missions. Argentina has always responded quickly and without conditions to the invitations of this Organization.

We concur with the Secretary-General that it is vital to improve deployment times for United Nations missions. Argentina will participate in any mechanism capable of cutting the time between the adoption of Security Council resolutions establishing an operation and the actual arrival of troops in the field.

The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty constitutes an important achievement towards ending the proliferation of nuclear arms. That is why we signed the Treaty on 24 September.

With respect to the area known as micro-disarmament, the steps taken by the United Nations to control arms transfers and the illegal traffic in arms, which undermine regional stability, are appropriate ones. My country has worked actively in the Disarmament Commission on the preparation of the guidelines for establishing effective control mechanisms.

Argentina feels it appropriate that the Secretary-General has called attention in his Supplement to "An Agenda for Peace" to the problem of anti-personnel landmines. We welcome the Security Council's initiative to hold an open debate on this tragic situation last August.

Mindful of this scourge, Argentina, within the Organization of American States has supported the demining programmes in Central America. In 1995, we suspended the export, sale or transfer of all types of mines. At the bilateral level, with regard to the United Kingdom we have offered to take responsibility for removing mines laid in the Malvinas Islands as a result of the conflict in 1982.

This report and those of earlier years set out among the most fruitful packages of measures carried out since the founding of this Organization. They have been carried out

in the context of changes in the international system whose depth cannot yet be fully evaluated. It is clear that the Organization must now prepare to face new conflicts, ever more diverse in terms of the actors involved and their increasingly complicated motivations. As the Secretary-General says, conflicts and confrontations within States are now more frequent than wars between them. We should add to this that what are known as the new threats to security are largely linked to the lack of development, the lack of education, and poverty. These are all mainly transnational phenomena. The United Nations therefore provides a unique forum for decisions and action. Therefore, we feel that any United Nations reform should be aimed at meeting these new challenges rather than at strengthening structures created as a result of a world and circumstances and problems which, fortunately, have already been buried in the past.

I conclude with a reference to a fact that is not in the report but which we feel would have fitted in well if circumstances had permitted, namely the very important position that the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, took on 7 October 1996 with respect to the situation of women and children in a sister country, a member of this General Assembly. This does not surprise us, because a militant stance in favour of human rights is never excessive. The Secretary-General has shown this to us all once again.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): Let me begin by saying that my delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's comprehensive report on the work of the Organization. I also wish to support fully the statement made by Colombia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. Given the importance of the report and the broad number of issues it addresses, the General Assembly's consideration should go beyond the present format of a debate in plenary meeting. In this regard, a serious attempt should be made by the General Assembly to conduct an in-depth analysis and exchange of views on the report, and/or on its debate on the report, for the purpose of taking concrete action on it. Naturally, undertaking this type of analysis would require a new way of considering the report in addition to the debate on this item.

We concur with the Secretary-General's observations in the introduction regarding the accomplishments of the Organization last year, particularly the historic recommitment by Member States to the purposes and principles of the United Nations in the context of its fiftieth anniversary. Nevertheless, we share his concern

that the past year brought indications of a diminished willingness to engage the critical international issues through the United Nations, and witnessed the deteriorating financial situation of the United Nations, and a downward trend in available development resources.

A major issue addressed in the report is the strengthening and reform of the United Nations. It is therefore important that our session advance the work of the open-ended working groups as soon as possible and in a satisfactory manner.

The High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System is considering measures aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly's ability to fulfil the role envisaged for it by the Charter of the United Nations, including measures geared towards enhancing its interaction with the other principal United Nations organs. We hope the Group will be in a position to recommend such measures to the General Assembly by the end of this session. The Group should also continue in-depth examination of issues related to the Secretariat, including enhancing its independent character and promoting diversity and gender balance of United Nations personnel at all levels.

Regarding the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, it is fairly evident that existing differences on key issues, especially those relating to the expansion of membership, can be resolved on a consensual basis only through compromise. Nevertheless, the latest report of that Group records a growing convergence of views on other key issues. It thus provides a good starting point for future work.

Ensuring a sound and viable financial basis for the Organization is an essential element of United Nations reform. The High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations must therefore arrive at concrete recommendations on measures addressing the question of arrears and the payment of contributions in full and on time.

Turning to part III of the report, it is essential that we treat development as an objective in its own right. The link between peace and development has never been in doubt. Yet development itself is a highly complex and comprehensive process and is clearly distinct from peace and security. Blurring this distinction or situating development in the context of peace tends to diminish what

has been and remains the fundamental concern of an overwhelming number of States Members of the United Nations and the majority of humankind. Development complements peace, and vice versa. It therefore deserves a chapter of its own in the report.

Bearing this observation in mind, we acknowledge with appreciation the efforts and activities of the Secretary-General and of the Organization in supporting and advancing international development cooperation, particularly the wide-ranging operational activities for development undertaken by the various programmes, funds and offices of the United Nations. However, we remain concerned at the international community's slow implementation of the numerous international development commitments. Any agreed agenda for development must aim to hasten the speed of implementation of these commitments.

We also note the vigorous efforts of the Secretary-General and of the United Nations system as a whole in promoting human rights. As in other areas of the United Nations, efforts should be maintained towards streamlining and rationalizing the United Nations human rights machinery.

Resolution 46/182 provides the operational framework for coordinated international action for humanitarian assistance and natural disasters. It emphasizes that humanitarian assistance should be put in a development context, namely the continuum from relief to rehabilitation to development. We attach importance to this point.

However, the continuum with respect to systemic breakdowns, or non-natural disasters, is more complicated because no amount of humanitarian assistance can rebuild a society decimated by conflict unless the underlying political problems of the conflict are being addressed. Humanitarian assistance is not a substitute for a political solution.

I also wish to highlight the Secretary-General's observations in paragraph 556 of his report concerning the unintended consequences of United Nations sanctions for some civilian populations in targeted countries, vulnerable groups in particular. The United Nations should keep this issue under continuous examination.

Regarding part IV of the report, we are particularly interested in knowing more about the nature of the data in the Humanitarian Early Warning System database

referred to in paragraph 645. We are also keen on gaining more information on the nature of the work of the Oversight Group mentioned in paragraph 646, as well as further details as to when the Secretariat would deem a situation a potential, as distinct from an actual, crisis.

On peacekeeping operations, greater participation of troop contributors in decision-making is essential, and we support the various efforts and proposals aimed at achieving this. We also fully support the enlargement of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations as soon as possible.

We underscore the Secretary-General's implicit recognition in paragraph 652 that preventive diplomacy activities are of a diplomatic nature. However, we feel the concept of preventive action must be examined further.

Regardless of the instrument used by the United Nations to address a conflict or prevent a dispute from erupting into conflict, we must nevertheless heed the Secretary-General's observation that no instrument for peace and security can bring about a lasting peace without the will of the parties to the conflict to achieve peace. This is an enduring truth that all policy makers must take to heart.

The Secretary-General states that the United Nations is in the midst of a dramatic transformation which has been neither smooth nor easy. Moreover, this transformation has touched all areas of United Nations activity; no part or sector has been exempted. Our responsibility as Member States is to direct this transformation towards positive and meaningful ends.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization is an important and helpful document. It offers a comprehensive overview of United Nations activities and provides a valuable insight into the efforts of the Organization to adjust to the needs of our time.

We commend the Secretary-General for this year's report and for its timely availability, which has greatly facilitated the preparation of the present discussion. It is our hope that in coming years the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization will be available even earlier in the year and that it will help focus the debate of this Assembly on the priority issues before the United Nations. We also commend the Secretary-General for the structure of this year's report, which has clearly

presented the principal tasks and the basic importance of the efforts for reform of the United Nations system.

In his address to the General Assembly two weeks ago, in the course of the general debate, the Prime Minister of Slovenia emphasized that the essence of the principal task before the United Nations today can be captured in two words: adjustment and modernization. The compelling need to adjust and to modernize the United Nations should be guiding the activities of the Organization, in particular those aiming at its reform.

However, the experience of United Nations reform efforts in the past year has not been entirely satisfactory. The progress of various General Assembly working groups has been slow, a fact to be noted with concern. The present session of the General Assembly should provide fresh incentive and energize the process of reform, which should proceed in a coherent and balanced manner.

The process of downsizing the Secretariat, while welcome and necessary, should become part of a wider change, characterized by a clear definition of the priorities of the United Nations and by a proper allocation of its human and material resources.

Greater discipline must be achieved in the financing of the United Nations. Assessed contributions must be paid in full, on time, and without conditions. While some progress in this direction has been made over the past year, the situation remains generally unsatisfactory. An additional task in this domain is to develop a new, more balanced scale of assessments that will more accurately reflect the principle of the capacity to pay. Furthermore, innovative forms of financing should be devised, in particular in such areas of work as protection of the environment and sustainable development.

In addition to the needed improvement and evolution, there is a need for structural change in some parts of the United Nations system. The necessary expansion and reform of the Security Council is a case in point. Intensive discussions on an increase in membership and on other changes have been taking place for more than two years now. They should soon provide answers to the questions of the adequate number and composition of the Security Council as well as to those related to its decision-making and working methods.

I have mentioned the experience of one of the General Assembly working groups, knowing full well that

the situation in other groups is in many respects similar. It is necessary at the current session that the General Assembly reflect on the experiences gained in the work of its working groups and that it recommend desirable methods for their further work. Much of the time of the working groups was spent on general and sometimes repetitious discussion of general issues. It is necessary now that wherever possible the groups should move towards a negotiating stage and try to elaborate specific proposals for reform. The working groups should not become a standard feature of the United Nations structure. They should become capable of devising solutions that can be part of the necessary reform packages. In no case should the roles of the working groups be allowed to resemble those of the Main Committees of the General Assembly.

The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization shows that the United Nations continues to be engaged in a variety of demanding activities. Every section of the report, including, typically, the section on the Secretariat, demonstrates that variety. Thus, for example, the work of the Office of Legal Affairs, outlined in paragraphs 112 to 134, ranges from research and preparation of legal opinions, legal advice and services on various aspects of peacekeeping operations, activities related to the International Criminal Tribunals established by the Security Council and support for the ongoing discussion on the establishment of an International Criminal Court to a variety of aspects of the law of the sea and the exploration of areas of the necessary codification and progressive development of international law. All these diverse areas of work are of special importance to the United Nations, which, in the first 50 years of its existence, has demonstrated that many if not most of the important achievements made in the process of international cooperation have had to be defined by law in order to become a stable basis of future evolution.

While reading the paragraphs on the Office of Legal Affairs, we did not fail to notice the text of paragraph 119. That paragraph deals with the question of the status of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) which, as pointed out by the Secretary-General, continues to raise sensitive legal and political issues. We agree with the view of the Secretary-General that consistency is essential in this matter. I wish to emphasize that consistency requires strict adherence to the applicable resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, namely Security Council resolution 777 (1992) and General Assembly resolution 47/1. It is worth recalling, that Security Council resolution 777 (1992) stated that the State formerly known as the Socialist Federal Republic of

Yugoslavia had ceased to exist and that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) had to apply for membership in the United Nations. I am convinced that when I emphasize the importance of this essential Security Council resolution, I am expressing the sentiments of the other four successor States of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and, indeed, the sentiments of the United Nations membership at large.

An important part of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization relates to global development activities. That part of the report shows the diversity of the tasks and programmes that constitute United Nations activities for global development. We welcome the enhanced focus on development issues affecting Africa and the initiatives intended to improve the prospects for more robust growth and development there. The support for regional capacity-building programmes, the incentives to revive private investment in Africa and other measures are among the main priorities of the development agenda today.

Another important set of priorities in this context relates to the eradication of poverty, a task of global importance which was at the centre of discussion at the World Summit for Social Development convened in Copenhagen in March 1995, and in the subsequent discussions on implementation. The Summit expressed the essential commitment to eradicate poverty and proposed Programme of Action for the implementation of that commitment. It is important that the activities necessary to carry out the decisions adopted at the World Social Summit proceed without hesitation.

One item is of particular importance in that regard. Poverty can be eradicated only by people who have been empowered. There are various ways to empower people and the specific tasks will vary from one country to another. In some societies, the priority will be the provision of necessary material resources and creating an enabling economic environment conducive to social progress and development. In others, the priority might be strengthening institutions and ensuring the rule of law. However, in all circumstances the application of country-specific priorities has to be in accordance with the requirements of human rights, including the right to development. It is important to note that all the global conferences dealing with various aspects of the global development agenda emphasized that requirement.

The philosophy of development that established the notions of the centrality of the human person in the development process and the intimate link between human rights and economic development has created a new environment for United Nations action in the field of human rights. It is encouraging to see, in paragraphs 623 to 642 of the report, that human rights are increasingly recognized as an important part of the United Nations agenda and that the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is expanding. It is commendable that the High Commissioner has already taken important steps to reorganize the Centre for Human Rights, in Geneva, with a view to making it more effective and more adequate as a tool for strengthened United Nations action, in particular action for the implementation of human rights. United Nations Members should now consider the need to strengthen existing human rights mechanisms and to assure adequate resources for their effective functioning. It is important to keep in mind that the amount of resources invested in human rights is never particularly large when compared with the many more expensive activities in other fields, and that it almost always yields immediate and important benefits for the people and their development.

The final chapter of this year's report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization is devoted to the question of armed conflict. Here the Secretary-General draws on recent experiences in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and disarmament and on the results of the ongoing debate on "An Agenda for Peace". These questions will be discussed in detail in the relevant Main Committees of the General Assembly. Detailed consideration is necessary not only because of the inherent importance of the issues at hand but also because of the fact that the United Nations is and will remain an Organization that has a particular responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

I shall limit my remarks today to only one aspect, namely to the evolving character of United Nations peacekeeping. The Secretary-General observed, in paragraph 655 of the report, that while the number of peacekeepers has diminished dramatically over the past year — from more than 67,000 in July 1995 to less than 26,000 in July 1996 — the complexity of their tasks has not diminished. This is an important consideration; while United Nations Members would prefer clear-cut mandates based on a set of simple and clear principles, actual circumstances often require complex operations characterized by a variety of tasks which are difficult to coordinate. Many of the operations require a carefully

thought-out policy mix involving both military and non-military aspects, humanitarian, political and other components.

The Secretary-General should therefore be given an opportunity and resources to analyze the lessons learned in developing the appropriate policy mix in given types of situations and to recommend general guidelines to help in decision-making in specific situations. We see elements of such guidelines in the report under consideration today, and in many other reports by the Secretary-General, and we would like to encourage him to continue with these efforts.

Let me emphasize in closing that the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization represents a very useful instrument for the work of the General Assembly. It reminds us of the complexity of the tasks undertaken by the United Nations and of the need to accelerate the process of reform. I hope that the current debate on the report will represent a meaningful contribution to reform.

Mr. Woroniecki (Poland): At the outset, I wish to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for preparing this important report in such a concise and clear format. The document before us reflects the complexity of the multifaceted work of the Organization since the celebration of its fiftieth anniversary and, unfortunately, under the impact of the financial crisis.

We believe that our evaluation of individual segments of United Nations activities should be performed with an eye to the indispensable process of reforming the Organization and, in the first place, its programme of work. For it is the programmatic content of its work which should be the cornerstone and point of departure for restructuring both intergovernmental and expert bodies and the Secretariat — and not the other way around. A rational downsizing of the United Nations machinery, desirable and in fact unavoidable as it is, should not lead to a further centralization of its activities at Headquarters, unless this entails unquestionable savings. The cost of operations in the various seats, including in regions where virtually no United Nations offices with at least regional competence exist — such as Central and Eastern Europe — should be the subject of comparative analysis.

We fully agree with the Secretary-General's observation that on all three levels — intergovernmental, organizational and managerial — the institutional reform

of the Organization must be pursued in a mutually reinforcing manner. This is equally true for the system as a whole. The sooner we understand this synergetic interrelationship, the better we can lay the groundwork for consensus throughout the reform process.

Economic and social development has become, in recent years, an increasingly significant sphere of the Organization's activity. This is especially true in the promotion of international cooperation for development, which, in the post-cold-war era, has taken on a special role, in conjunction with efforts to strengthen democracy and the market economy. Here, more than ever, the international exchange of experience, and of best practices, is called for in the United Nations system's operational activities for development.

Adaptation to the conditions prevailing towards the end of the twentieth century often entails heavy social costs — especially for developing countries and those in transition. To alleviate such costs, international solidarity is needed. To foster such solidarity is a vital task for the Organization, for the United Nations system and for the Bretton Woods institutions. We should concentrate our work on improving the overall environment for sustainable social and economic development and on creating modalities for international cooperation to help cope with current and future challenges.

We share the opinion that the United Nations offers a unique institutional framework to promote human-centred, equitable, socially and environmentally sustainable development. Given the complexity of problems faced by the least developed countries — such as underdevelopment, external debt, scarcity of food, and weak social safety nets — we support the view that in the future the United Nations system should devote more attention to the problems of the poorest. The United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa is of particular importance here. We declare our readiness to cooperate in its implementation.

It has been four years since the General Assembly, at its forty-seventh session, initiated the process of formulating an Agenda for Development. Although we note some progress in the negotiations, we feel that work on this document should be intensified to provide a solid base for international development cooperation in the years to come. Let me recall that Poland was among the countries that proposed such an agenda. We now think the time has come to elaborate, or to begin to elaborate, a third document of a similar nature: an Agenda for Human Rights.

At the same time, activities relating precisely to this subject — the protection of human rights and their standing within the United Nations — need to be enhanced. The Organization should improve the conditions for ongoing international dialogue on the protection of human rights, and create mechanisms for ensuring compliance with international standards and for the flow of technical assistance. Appropriate funds for this purpose should be made available to the High Commissioner and the Centre for Human Rights, in Geneva. Their interaction needs to be streamlined.

The President of the Republic of Poland, in his address to the General Assembly on 24 September, pointed out that to meet the challenges of the next millennium, the United Nations might consider, *inter alia*, the establishment of a General Assembly committee on human rights and humanitarian affairs, while simultaneously merging the existing Second and Third Committees into an economic and social committee. I would recall that my delegation advocated such a solution on numerous occasions, most recently this year, in the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System.

The activities of the United Nations system in the humanitarian area also call for a clear vision of how to ensure consistency and coherence of humanitarian operations. A leading role for the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, led by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, is in our view a precondition for success. The existing infrastructure at Headquarters and in the field — including the potential of the United Nations Development Programme, with its Resident Coordinator network — could, we think, be better utilized. We commend the work already done by the Inter-agency Standing Committee and the development of the Humanitarian Early Warning System, carried out in the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The strengthening of coordination of humanitarian assistance activities between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations agencies should continue, and should be aimed at identifying and eliminating gaps and imbalances in current arrangements and duplication of responsibilities. It should result in an improvement in the quality and cost-effectiveness of assistance provided.

Since its establishment in 1991, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) has been able as a result of institutional reforms to formulate a number of useful action programmes that have been

approved by the General Assembly, and improve the delivery of technical assistance. UNDCP, entrusted with the exclusive responsibility for coordinating and providing leadership for all United Nations drug-control activities, has been successful in strengthening its leadership within the United Nations system and in sponsoring useful activities on the national, regional and global levels.

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs, as the specialized policy-making body in the field of international drug control and as a kind of governing body for UNDCP, should continue its search for sound ways and means for communication with the secretariat of the Programme, as the latter often acts as an executive agency for the Commission. We would encourage more inter-sessional informal consultations to serve this purpose.

Poland supported the convening of global conferences under United Nations auspices in the 1990s. They contributed to greater public awareness, generating ideas and securing new commitments. In particular, we have paid special attention to the problems reflected in the Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Beijing Conference on Women and in the Programme of Action adopted by the World Social Summit in Copenhagen. The decisions of these conferences, however, must be consistently followed through. Implementation of their results — the test of the real intention of Member States to meet their commitments — should be monitored by competent bodies.

We believe however, that the General Assembly and its special sessions should be used for this purpose. Together with the Economic and Social Council, they constitute suitable forums both for review and for focusing on new challenges in a climate of genuine cooperation and solidarity. To fulfil such a role fully, non-governmental organizations should also be involved. Their activities have become an essential dimension of public life today. We therefore welcome cooperation between them and the United Nations system, as mentioned in the report under consideration.

We appreciate the contribution made by the Secretariat in preparing for and following up the series of General Assembly meetings on public administration and development. Effective public administration can play a crucial role in coordinating development activities and ensuring efficiency and social safety nets within the development process.

We look forward to next year's special session of the General Assembly on the review of the implementation of Agenda 21. In accordance with the attention focused on the ecological dimension of development, further policy guidance on the most effective ways to implement this important document should be the least to be expected from that gathering.

My delegation would like to note with appreciation the Secretary-General's efforts at limiting the Organization's expenditures in order to maintain the first zero-growth budget for this biennium, despite the new unbudgeted mandates added during the year. However, we would prefer to strengthen action to attain further cost reductions through the redeployment of resources and efficiency measures rather than merely through staff cuts, even though the first round of such staff cuts, implemented last year, has already resulted in substantial savings. Restructuring — including long overdue simplification of the heavy institutional framework — and better performance are far from exhausting the objectives of the reform of the United Nations as we see them. The primary objective of United Nations reform must consist in a profound revision of its work programme and a better division of labour among all the components of the system.

Poland aligns itself with Member States that have continuously supported efforts aimed at resolving the drastic financial situation of the Organization. The protracted and acute financial crisis cannot leave us indifferent. Yet the solution will not come by itself. Firm determination to heal United Nations finances and to prevent the reoccurrence of yet another crisis is needed. That is why the President of the Republic of Poland proposed in the general debate an innovative additional source of financing for the Organization, especially of its humanitarian and development support activities: a United Nations trust fund, to be generated from voluntary donations from the private transnational business sector. To make this a reality, host Governments would have to create conditions such as common rules for tax reduction and other possible incentives. We suggest that this idea be examined by the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations.

We have also noted with satisfaction that the Secretary-General devotes due attention in his report to the work of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). The ECE, through its close and effective relationship with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and

Development (OECD), the European Union, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Council of Europe, as well as subregional organizations such as the Central European Initiative and the Council of Baltic States, can efficiently address a number of regional problems, especially those confronting countries in transition. Reform processes initiated in the economic and social sector of the United Nations system and in related areas should result in the strengthening of the Commission, preparing it to cope with its mandated tasks and to extend its scope of interest to selected social issues as necessary. Poland cannot support the view that the activities of regional commissions should be curtailed.

Poland welcomes the Organization's contribution to making our world safer and more secure through disarmament and non-proliferation. The decision of the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to extend that Treaty indefinitely, the opening of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for signature, the improvement of the effectiveness of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and guidelines for controlling international arms transfers are among the achievements of our Organization, and of the Conference on Disarmament.

In the view of our delegation, the negotiations on a multilateral, internationally verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for weapons purposes, known as the cut-off treaty, and limiting the international trade in small arms should continue. Poland attaches great importance to solution of the problem surrounding a permanent ban on the production, development, stockpiling, use and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. We support the initiatives of the United States and Canada in this regard, as well as the seven-point action programme proposed by Germany.

The Polish delegation welcomes the work of the General Assembly's Informal Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Peace. Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and post-conflict peace-building, together with conventional peacekeeping operations, should remain the key instruments available to the United Nations to resolve conflicts and maintain peace and security. These operations should remain within the purview of the Organization in both the conceptual and the practical spheres. I have in mind the work of the Open-ended Group, the Security Council's elaboration of the concept of peacekeeping, and the Council's cooperation with nations not members of the Council.

We are satisfied that efforts are under way to improve the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping operations. The Secretariat, at the request of the General Assembly, has worked closely with interested delegations to develop the concept of a rapidly deployable headquarters team. Furthermore, significant progress has been achieved in the improvement of the system of stand-by arrangements, including the related issue of establishing a United Nations stand-by forces high readiness brigade. From the very beginning, Poland has actively participated in these efforts. We recently increased our contribution to stand-by arrangements. We share our knowledge and experience in the discussions on the Danish initiative. In other forums, such as the friends of rapid deployment, we have joined other nations in the search for ways to enhance the peacekeeping capacity of the United Nations.

We support the view that cuts in the staffing of the Secretariat should be conducted in such a way as not to undermine the structural integrity of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations or, generally, the Organization's capacity to deal with its complex tasks in this field. We understand that realities dictate the need to reduce the scope of some ongoing operations. In one such operation, under the command of a Polish general, the difficult task of streamlining has just been completed with success. The necessity of carrying out indispensable reductions, be it at Headquarters or in the field, should not deprive us of the necessary margin of flexibility.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Poland's support for the work of the Organization as it approaches the threshold of a new century. Is it not typical of a *fin de siècle* that many old tasks remain unsolved, while life brings us new problems? The United Nations and its system require a parallel effort both to reform itself and to cope with the challenges facing the world community. International cooperation, under the auspices both of the United Nations aegis and those of other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, is more often than not essential to deal effectively with these challenges, as well as to prevent and constrain evil. Let us not forget that we ourselves make up the United Nations, and that only the political will of the Members can move us forward, on the path set out by the Charter, into the next century, for the benefit of the international community and of universal well-being.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

**Adoption of the agenda and organization of work:
reports of the General Committee**

**Second report of the General Committee
(A/51/250/Add.1)**

The Acting President: I draw the attention of representatives to the second report of the General Committee, concerning a request by a number of delegations for the inclusion in the agenda of an additional item, entitled "Observer Status for the International Seabed Authority in the General Assembly".

In paragraph 2 of its report, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that the item entitled "Observer status for the International Seabed Authority in the General Assembly" should be included in the agenda of the current session. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this additional item in the agenda of the current session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Committee further decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the additional item be considered directly in plenary meeting. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider this item in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.