



# General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

**30**<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting  
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New York

*Official Records*

*President:* Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

## Agenda item 9 (continued)

### General debate

**The President:** I call on the Chairman of the delegation of Vanuatu, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ravou-Akii.

**Mr. Ravou-Akii** (Vanuatu) (*interpretation from French*): First of all, Sir, I offer you my delegation's heartiest congratulations on the occasion of your election to the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. Your rich experience in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy is, for my delegation, a guarantee for the success of our work. My country, the Republic of Vanuatu, and yours, Malaysia, enjoy friendly and cooperative relations.

I also wish to express my country's thanks to your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for the commitment, competence and skill with which he guided our work at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

I wish to express my country's appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the remarkable work that he has consistently done since the very beginning of his term of office in the service of our Organization. I reaffirm here my Government's support for the principle by which, according to tradition, Africa has a right to a second mandate.

My Government has made its modest contribution to disarmament and arms-control measures. This modest contribution has been made in the areas of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction alike. With regard to conventional weapons, on 10 July 1996 the Republic of Vanuatu provided the Secretary-General, through the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, with information on imports, exports and the re-exportation of weapons covered by the Register of Conventional Arms established by the Secretary-General under General Assembly resolution 46/36 L of 9 December 1991. The information I have mentioned is contained in the report of the Secretary-General in document A/51/300 of 20 August 1996.

I wish to reaffirm the position of the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu on the complete elimination of anti-personnel landmines. Indeed, at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, the Republic of Vanuatu voted in favour of resolution 50/70 O entitled "Moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines". As we all know, the majority of the victims of anti-personnel landmines are women and children.

In the area of weapons of mass destruction, my Government has made its modest contribution through measures at both the regional and international levels. Let us take a look first at the regional level.

The Republic of Vanuatu acceded last year to the Treaty of Rarotonga establishing the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone. I take this opportunity, on behalf of

the people and the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu, to congratulate the United States of America, the French Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which signed the Treaty last year. My Government welcomed the ratification last September by the French Republic of the Protocols to the Rarotonga Treaty and pays tribute to its initiative of sending an expert team from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to conduct a radiological study at the sites of French nuclear tests in French Polynesia.

In the area of global nuclear disarmament, on 24 September 1996 I signed, on behalf of my Government, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty adopted by the General Assembly on 10 September 1996. Moreover, my country acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, opened for signature in Moscow, London and Washington on 1 July 1968, and supports the indefinite extension of that Treaty.

The Republic of Vanuatu, like other Members of our Organization, took note of the Advisory Opinion rendered last summer by the International Court of Justice, the legal organ of the United Nations, on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. This Advisory Opinion is an additional commitment in favour of nuclear disarmament. The major objective of measures taken and to be taken by the Republic of Vanuatu in the coming years is to demonstrate our commitment to the complete and general disarmament of our entire planet.

I would like to express my Government's views on some regional conflicts, namely, those in the former Yugoslavia in Central Europe, in the Great Lakes region in the heart of the African continent, and in the Middle East. Regarding the situation in the former Yugoslavia in Central Europe, my Government welcomes the elections held on 14 September as an important step forward for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the Great Lakes region of Africa, my Government supports the efforts of our Organization, in close cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, to avert a widespread war in that region. Finally, with respect to the situation in the Middle East, my Government congratulates the Palestinian and Israeli delegations on having decided last Sunday, 6 October 1996, to resume discussions that should lead to a lasting peace in that region.

In the area of international law, the United Nations, through the International Law Commission, must continue to play a major role in the codification of international law. In this respect, the Republic of Vanuatu joins with other

Members of the United Nations in calling for the convening of an international conference of plenipotentiaries entrusted with considering the draft statute of an international court prepared by the International Law Commission and with concluding a convention establishing an international criminal court.

In the area of human rights, in September 1995 the National Parliament of the Republic of Vanuatu adopted a law on the office of mediators. The mediator began his work in late 1995. I take this opportunity to thank the Government of Papua New Guinea, in the context of cooperation between members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, for its valuable technical assistance in helping my Government to implement fully and with relative celerity the provisions of the aforementioned law. Above and beyond the role of mediator, there is, obviously, the fundamental law — the Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu — which guarantees the fundamental rights and individual freedoms of all of its citizens.

I wish to recall the statement made here by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu at last year's commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations, in which he reaffirmed the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu's support for the reform and rational management of the United Nations system. I also take this opportunity to express my Government's opinion that the scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of our Organization must faithfully reflect the capacity to pay of the Member States of our Organization.

In the area of development, my Government will participate in the special session of the General Assembly next year devoted to the assessment of Agenda 21 and hopes, with other delegations that have expressed this idea here, that new commitments will be undertaken towards the environment. In this respect, the Environment Unit of Vanuatu's national bureau of the environment, created in 1986 under the auspices of the Ministry of Natural Resources, will work in close collaboration with the environmental programme of the Oceanian region in preparing the Pacific region's contribution to the work of the special session of the General Assembly.

Last year, through a decision of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Decentralization to apply the law on decentralization within the Republic of Vanuatu, my Government reduced the number of provinces from 11 to 6. The purpose of this reduction was, first, to allow the

major islands to help the smaller ones; secondly, to allocate financial and human resources to all of the provinces; and, finally, to demonstrate the will of my Government to decentralize administrative and public functions for the benefit of provinces. In other words, it encourages communities and individuals to participate in the economic and social development of the Republic. In this regard, I take this opportunity to thank the United Nations Development Programme in its capacity as a multilateral partner in the regional efforts of all Oceanian States and, more particularly, for its valuable assistance to the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu in drafting its book on sustainable human development in Vanuatu. My Government presented this book to the press on 23 September.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm here the faith of the Republic of Vanuatu in the United Nations.

**The President:** I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, His Excellency Mr. Amnuay Viravan.

**Mr. Viravan** (Thailand): On behalf of the Government and people of Thailand, I should like to extend my warmest congratulations to Your Excellency upon your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, which marks the beginning of the next half-century for the United Nations. I am confident that, with your leadership and guidance, this session will mark a successful beginning for the work of the United Nations in the next 50 years and in the new century.

From what we have seen so far, you are already off to a good start. By insisting on beginning our meetings on time over the past three weeks and not succumbing to the traditional half-hour delay before starting the meetings, you have, in effect, prevented the wastage of both time and money for the United Nations and its Member States. This act is truly an admirable display of leadership. My delegation looks forward to seeing more such constructive initiatives in the future.

As a close neighbour of Malaysia and a fellow member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, Thailand is particularly pleased to see you in this important office. You can count on my delegation's fullest cooperation in all your endeavours at this session.

My delegation also wishes to take this opportunity to express its sincere appreciation to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, the President of the historic fiftieth

session of the General Assembly, for his most commendable efforts in making the fiftieth session and the fiftieth anniversary year of the United Nations truly monumental and fruitful.

My delegation is especially grateful to Mr. Freitas do Amaral for his role in facilitating the work of the General Assembly's working groups on the reform of the United Nations, particularly 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. Under his stewardship, that Working Group was able to adopt, for the first time, a substantive and comprehensive report which was acceptable to all.

As we enter the next half-century of the United Nations and the closing years of the twentieth century, it is becoming increasingly clear that we, our children and grandchildren will soon be living in a new era that is very different from today's. The last decades of this century have set the stage for a major shift in global paradigms that will forever change the way in which we live and work.

In recent years, events such as the population explosion, the ebbing of the ideological tide and the technological and communications revolution have brought to the fore such issues as the management of food and resources, preservation of the environment, the need to improve income distribution, education and health care, and the promotion of civil rights and equalities, democracy and good governance.

In the United Nations and elsewhere, there is a clear indication that the prominence of such issues will continue into the next century and beyond. If we are to be able to address these issues, deal with them in an efficient manner, go through the transition and adjust ourselves to the paradigm shift, we need a concerted and comprehensive approach. This approach should be proactive rather than reactive and should be able to provide a new course of action for future generations.

The development and implementation of such an approach require leadership at the global level. As the only international body that deals with a vast array of global issues on a daily basis, the United Nations is in a unique position to provide that leadership.

Thailand is convinced that, in order to be able to assume a leadership role, it is imperative that the United

Nations first be reformed and revitalized at all three levels — intergovernmental, organizational and managerial. It is for these reasons that Thailand attaches great importance to the work of the General Assembly's five working groups on United Nations reform. Thailand believes that, if given the necessary political will and cooperation from Member States, each of these working groups will soon be able to make specific recommendations to the General Assembly that would serve as salient elements of a single comprehensive reform package.

It is unfortunate, however, that, in spite of the fact that most of these working groups have been in existence for two to three years, a compromise on crucial issues is nowhere in sight. Furthermore, should this trend continue, it is unlikely that we will see any substantial achievement from these working groups in the near future.

This desolate scenario is certainly detrimental to the future of the United Nations, especially when we are merely a few steps away from the next century. It is the belief of my delegation that, if we are to make any progress in the work of the working groups, the time is now. The more we hesitate and bicker, the less chance there will be of any meaningful reform of the United Nations.

Due to the lack of progress in the work of some of the working groups, some Member States have begun to suggest that deadlines be imposed on their work. Thailand does not believe that such deadlines are necessary. In fact, Thailand believes that, within a year or two, if no serious compromise is to be found, the momentum for reform efforts will simply wither away. At that point, we will no longer have to worry about deadlines or the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations in managing itself and in dealing with twenty-first-century issues. Without the necessary reforms, the fate of the United Nations is sealed.

My delegation therefore wishes to call upon all fellow Member States to redouble their efforts, in the spirit of cooperation and compromise and for the benefit of the greater whole, to help facilitate the work of the working groups in the hope that, in the very near future, they will be able to come up with practical recommendations to the General Assembly and that, eventually, a comprehensive reform package can be formulated. What is indispensable for the twenty-first century is a more capable, more representative, more accountable and better managed United Nations.

Year after year, we speak about the need to reform the United Nations. Year after year, we come back to the same problem: the willingness or, to be more precise, the lack of

willingness of Member States to see the United Nations become what they themselves said the United Nations should become. The United Nations cannot be reformed simply by lip-service. No meaningful reform of the United Nations can take place without the political, material and financial support of its Members. The failure of Member States to meet their financial obligations to the United Nations, in particular, not only undermines the United Nations ability to reform but, more importantly, in actuality is the root cause of some of the United Nations current inefficiencies. It is for this reason that my delegation finds it politically and legally unacceptable for Member States intentionally to withhold their assessed contributions to the United Nations on any grounds whatsoever.

When my delegation speaks about United Nations leadership, we are referring specifically to two sources of leadership. The first is the General Assembly, as it is the most universal and, undeniably, the most important organ of the United Nations. The other is the Secretary-General as the chief administrative officer of the Organization.

As far as the General Assembly is concerned, my delegation believes that it is essential that the pre-eminence of the General Assembly vis-à-vis other principal organs of the United Nations continue to be emphasized. This pre-eminence should be not only in words, but also in reality. The General Assembly must be the ultimate decision-making body on all important questions, as specified in the Charter, and not simply a rubber stamp for decisions or agreements concocted elsewhere. The General Assembly must truly be the voice of and moral compass for the international community.

As for the Secretary-General, my delegation is of the view that the twenty-first century demands that the chief executive officer of the United Nations be someone with exemplary courage and vision. That person must have the courage to take bold initiatives, to stand up for what he or she believes is right as well as to promote and defend the interest of the greater whole. He or she must have the vision and the managerial adeptness to turn the United Nations into one of the most efficient and purposeful international institutions of our time. Due to the increasingly demanding responsibilities of the Secretary-General, Thailand is inclined to support the idea that the posts of Deputy Secretary-General be created and that these deputies be empowered to act on behalf of the Secretary-General in certain areas of his or her overwhelming responsibilities. Moreover, in order to be able to perform his or her functions with full efficiency

and without the interference of undue external pressures, a United Nations Secretary-General should serve only one term in office, be it of five or seven years.

Through close coordination and cooperation between the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, a comprehensive approach for the future can be developed and implemented with efficiency. The development and implementation of this new approach should be guided by the main purposes of the United Nations, namely, the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of global economic and social development. These dual responsibilities are the *raison d'être* of the United Nations. They have come to symbolize the efforts towards global cooperation and my delegation believes that their goals should continue to be pursued with vigour and the fullest cooperation from United Nations Member States.

In this connection, my delegation wishes to commend Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General, for his initiatives on "An Agenda for Peace" and "An Agenda for Development". By having the foresight to come up with these very important documents in the early years of this decade, the Secretary-General has provided us with blueprints for the future upon which we can plan and visualize a new direction for a new United Nations.

As I pointed out earlier, there is a clear trend that the main issues that will confront us in the future are those of economic and social development. The key concepts for the twenty-first century are sustainable economic growth and sustainable human and social development. For this reason, my delegation believes that now is the time for greater attention to be given to these issues. This belief does not stem from the fact that Thailand herself is a developing country, but rather from the realization that a solid economic and social foundation is an indispensable prerequisite for sustainable peace and prosperity.

At the international level in particular, functional cooperation in these areas could create a network of interdependence based on goodwill and mutual interests, which could help eliminate conflicts and misunderstandings. It is with this belief that Thailand has consistently been a strong advocate of United Nations activities in the field of economic and social development, as well as humanitarian activities, and has been an active participant in the efforts to reform the mechanisms of the United Nations in these areas. A good example of Thailand's commitment to the United Nations development effort is her agreement to host the tenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in the year 2000. In

the meantime, we are pleased that the five major international summits organized by the United Nations, ranging from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 to Habitat II in Istanbul earlier this year, have proved to be useful in enabling Member States to focus on the various aspects of development and to cultivate a common vision and a comprehensive strategy for cooperation among themselves. We hope that the outcome of such conferences will help convince Member States of the need to render all necessary assistance and cooperation to the United Nations for its efforts in these areas.

But while we believe that international cooperation could stimulate and promote development, we also believe that development efforts should, first and foremost, begin at home. As a developing country, Thailand has always attached high importance to both economic growth and social development and has aspired to achieve an equilibrium between the two. This is evident in all of Thailand's national development plans. Currently Thailand is entering its eighth five-year national economic and social development plan. We are particularly proud of this plan, since, for the first time, the main focus is on human development: it is a human-centred national development plan. It is not by chance that the focus of this plan coincides with recent efforts of the United Nations and with the United Nations development strategy spelt out in the Secretary-General's "An Agenda for Development" (A/48/935). In fact, the plan has been drawn up so as to complement and respond to development efforts at all levels: local, national, regional and global.

As a country of 60 million people, Thailand sees that human and social development are the keys to national development, since without any doubt a nation's most precious resource is its citizens. For this reason, through the years the Thai Government, often under the direct royal guidance of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, has been implementing hundreds of royal national development projects, ranging from environmental protection to education, from agriculture to public health care. Some of these projects, such as narcotic suppression through the introduction of crop substitution, are internationally recognized and are being implemented in close cooperation with the United Nations and other international agencies. As this is the year that the Thai nation celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of His Majesty's ascension to the throne, we are more determined than ever to continue on this path and to rededicate ourselves to advancing the cause which is so close to the heart of

our beloved monarch. Therefore, in the years ahead Thailand will continue to work hard and to cooperate closely with the international community in order to realize the goals of sustainable economic, human and social development.

An important instrument through which States can realize their economic and social development goals is international trade. It is therefore essential that all States be treated with fairness and be given the same opportunities in the international marketplace. This is the basic principle behind the establishment of the World Trade Organization. However, what we see now is a disturbing tendency on the part of some States to use non-trade issues, such as human rights and labour standards, as leverage in trade negotiations. Even more alarmingly, we are seeing an effort by some to exercise extraterritorial powers through domestic legislation, impinging upon the freedom of other States to pursue independent foreign policies and trading practices.

My delegation cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of keeping trade separate from other issues. Trade must remain free and open and not be held hostage to dissolute motives. Non-trade issues must not be brought in to be used as a smokescreen disguising neo-protectionist policies and practices. To allow such a phenomenon to continue would only undo the gains that we have made over the past half century.

As mentioned above, Thailand believes in the time-proven notion that the benefits of functional cooperation in the field of economic and social development could have a positive spillover effect on efforts for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, this does not mean that Thailand is idly waiting for such an effect to materialize. On the contrary, as in the past, Thailand has continued to be active in the field of international peace and security and follows with vigilance the political and security developments in various parts of the world. We are keeping a watchful eye on, among other things, the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the fragile peace efforts in the Middle East and the unfolding situations in such diverse places as Angola, Haiti and Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium.

In particular, as a member of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the coordinator of the Non-Aligned Movement for this issue, Thailand is very much in support of the idea that the United Nations overall policy on peacekeeping should be re-examined. We believe that there should be clear guidelines and principles with

regard to the scope, depth, objectives and mandates of United Nations peacekeeping activities in order to ensure that United Nations involvement in conflict situations will be practical, meaningful and cost-effective.

At a time when the United Nations is facing a financial crisis, Thailand also supports the notion that there should be clear time-frames for United Nations peacekeeping operations. Of the existing 16 United Nations peacekeeping operations, two date back to the 1940s, one to the 1960s and two to the 1970s. These five peacekeeping operations, which have been running for decades, have thus far cost the United Nations and its Member States almost \$240 million and, more importantly, the lives of 461 peacekeepers. Looking at these figures, one cannot but wonder whether it is the United Nations that is not keeping the peace, or the parties involved that are not willing to have peace. Whatever the answer is, the international community is paying a high price for these operations, without any end in sight.

As international and internal conflicts rage on, the armaments business continues to prosper. My delegation is gratified that the Disarmament Commission, at its 1996 session, was able to adopt the guidelines for international arms transfers. Despite their lack of legal force, the guidelines are an important step towards eliminating illegal armaments, especially small arms, which in our lifetime have caused too many losses and too much suffering to peoples in all corners of the world.

My delegation believes that, parallel to this effort to regulate the flow of arms, there should also be methods of bringing to justice the perpetrators of crimes and violence against humanity. It is in this belief that my delegation welcomes the Economic and Social Council's United Nations Declaration on crime and public security as well as the efforts to establish an international criminal court. Even though these mechanisms will not make our lives more secure, they nevertheless give us hope that from now on there will be punishment to suit the crime.

As far as human destruction is concerned, nothing is more terrifying than the threat of a nuclear holocaust. For this reason, my delegation is pleased that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has now been adopted by the General Assembly and is currently open for signature by interested States. Once in its operational phase, the Treaty will be an important complement to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which was extended indefinitely in 1995.

However, neither the CTBT nor the NPT are adequate guarantees against the threat of a nuclear holocaust. My delegation believes that the only practical way to safeguard the world against a nuclear catastrophe is to eliminate all nuclear weapons. This can be done on a step-by-step basis within a definite time-frame. As a starter, in the spirit of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice earlier this year, we could deny the legality of the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons. Eventually, we can make the total elimination of all nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, as well as of other weapons of mass destruction, a top priority for the twenty-first century.

Last year, our Heads of State and Government gathered here to pay tribute to the United Nations for its 50 years of service to humankind and to renew their pledge to continue to work with the United Nations to realize the hopes and dreams of the framers of the United Nations Charter. Through the Declaration adopted on that occasion, our leaders also promised 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, fifth preambular paragraph*)

Today, I am here to reaffirm that pledge and to propose further that the United Nations assume the leadership role that would help guide us into the next century. In providing this leadership, the United Nations need not depart from what it has been doing for the past 50 years. The United Nations should continue to do what it does best in areas such as the maintenance of international peace and security; economic, human and social development; humanitarian emergencies; promotion of democracy and human rights; environmental protection; and technical cooperation. The only differences are that in future the United Nations will have to do these things much better and in a more effective and efficient manner. And, more importantly, the Organization will have to project a clearer sense of purpose and direction, which will help Member States and their peoples formulate a universal and

comprehensive approach to cope with the emerging paradigms of the twenty-first century.

We are about to cross the threshold into a new and challenging era. Through the leadership of the United Nations, we can turn the challenges into rewards and opportunities.

**The President:** We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Bwakira** (Burundi) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of Burundi has followed with close attention all the statements made by the Heads of delegations who have spoken in the General Assembly to present the positions of their respective Governments on the international situation and on items included in this session's agenda.

Some statements have made particular mention of the situation prevailing in my country in the aftermath of the political change that has occurred since 25 July 1996. My delegation warmly welcomes the interest that all delegations have shown in Burundi. Overall, there has been friendship and sympathy for our country, which has been the target of brutal and massive sanctions.

Nevertheless, some delegations seem to be unaware of the events that have marked the political development of Burundi over the past two months. As proof of that, I would refer to the statement made in the Assembly on 9 October 1996 by the representative of Malawi, who misinterpreted the facts of the changes in the political situation in my country. Contrary to his allegations, there was no *coup d'état* on 25 July last. In truth, what occurred was what might be described as an act of rescue of an entire people under threat, an act inspired by civil society and the other vital forces of the nation.

On 1 October of this year the Minister of Foreign Relations and Cooperation of Burundi, speaking in this very Hall, gave a true version of the facts. On that occasion, he apprised many Heads of delegation of the

political situation prevailing in Burundi. When he met with the Group of African States on 8 October, he seized his opportunity and took the time patiently to set forth the facts for the delegations that were present. He answered all the questions that were raised, in particular those raised by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malawi. It is therefore somewhat surprising to note that the Minister of Malawi has taken no account of the answers given him and has made a statement that is in contradiction with the facts in Burundi.

In view of that, my delegation would like, once again, to make the following clarifications: The regime that fell on 25 July was blatantly powerless to ensure the survival of the imperilled nation. The Government that existed prior to 25 July 1996 had not been an elected Government. It was the result of a Convention on Governance concluded by the political parties to create an entity to govern the State of Burundi during a transitional period. All the political parties that signed the Convention had withdrawn their confidence in the President of the Republic of the pre-25 July 1996 regime. A popular uprising was imminent that would overthrow the regime, which was incapable of restoring peace to the country.

The President of the pre-25 July 1996 regime had already resigned, de facto, since he had sought refuge in a foreign embassy. Given the worsening of the situation in the country, the vital forces of the nation requested President Pierre Buyoya to assume power on a transitional basis in order to save the country from chaos. He is well known as an artisan of national unity and a firm believer in democracy.

If the general embargo imposed on Burundi by neighbouring countries had not hindered the free circulation of goods and people, the new regime would already have sent missions to many countries to apprise them of the true course of events in Burundi since 25 July 1996. The new regime has already submitted a request to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to send observers to Burundi to attest to the facts prevailing in the country. Any country that so wishes is free to send an observer mission to Burundi so that they can speak about the situation in full knowledge of the facts.

The regime established by President Buyoya is determined to return peace to the country and to enter into dialogue with all vital forces of the nation, including all the armed factions.

**Mr. Bune (Fiji):** My delegation would like to speak in exercise of the right of reply in relation to the reference made to my country by the Prime Minister of Mauritius in his statement this morning.

As I said in my statement in the general debate on 4 October, the Government of Fiji appointed an independent Constitution Review Commission to review the 1990 Constitution, under which indigenous Fijians enjoy majority representation in Parliament. The three-member Commission, headed by Sir Paul Reeves of New Zealand, has completed its work, and only last month submitted its report and recommendations to the Government. The report has been submitted to Parliament and a Joint Parliamentary Select Committee, comprising representatives of all the political parties in Parliament, yesterday began consideration of the report and recommendations to find a consensus.

One of the aims of the review is the guarantee and protection of the indigenous Fijians, who enjoyed sole possession and occupation of the Islands of Fiji for over 3,000 years, and of course to guarantee and protect the interests of the other communities in Fiji. The indigenous Fijians constitute the majority of Fiji's population. Democracy, according to political norms, is founded on the principle of majority.

It would not be appropriate for me to project or predict what the outcome of the deliberations of the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee will be. The indigenous people of Fiji, however, are conscious of the fate of the indigenous peoples in the history of the world and even today. In several countries, indigenous peoples no longer exist; they are history, and their culture vaguely remembered. In some countries, for many reasons, their population declined. They are marginalized, as in Mauritius. The indigenous Fijians do not wish to suffer a similar fate. The other salient fact is that the indigenous Fijians, through their land-owning units, own 83 per cent of all Fiji, bestowing on them proprietary rights.

The issue in Fiji is not one of race, it is one of rights. It is to find a national consensus on a constitutional framework to guarantee, protect and enhance the rights of the indigenous people who constitute the majority of the population, to protect their lands, their 3,000-year-old tradition, customs and culture and to conjointly guarantee, protect and enhance the future of the other communities in Fiji.

The priority for my Government is not membership of the Commonwealth Club. The resolution of the constitution issue is the top priority for Fiji.

**Mr. Tanç** (Turkey): This right of reply is in reference to the statement of Mr. Pangalos, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, which was made on 27 September 1996. Before going into detail, I should emphasize one point.

We regret the attempt by a member of the Government of a country to exploit the Assembly by expressing unfounded and misleading views. We hope the day will come when Greece will not feel the need to resort to misrepresentation of facts.

We earnestly hope that the Government of Greece, headed by Prime Minister Simitis, will adopt a more constructive attitude towards improving Turkish-Greek relations. The improvement of relations requires goodwill, but the kind of language used by Mr. Pangalos against my country is in no way compatible with such an approach.

Most of the problems between Turkey and Greece concern the Aegean Sea. The peaceful solution of such disputes requires, first and foremost, a dialogue between the parties. Accordingly, Turkey has declared many times that it is ready for a constructive dialogue with Greece without any preconditions, whereas Greece has consistently evaded negotiations on the pretext that the existing serious problems are not "problems", but rather encroachments by Turkey on the sovereign rights of Greece.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. A clear example of Greece's misrepresentation of facts is the allegation made by the Greek Foreign Minister regarding the so-called violations of Greek airspace by Turkish war planes. Greece is the only country in the world that we know of that claims different air and sea spaces. In international law, the breadth of national airspace has to correspond to the breadth of the territorial sea. This is clearly reflected in articles 1 and 2 of the 1994 Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation. Greece's claim of a national airspace of 10 miles, regardless of its six-mile territorial sea, is not recognized by the international community. Therefore, the Greek protests on this issue are illegitimate and arbitrary. They are a reflection of an expansionist and aggressive attitude in the Aegean.

The real threat to peace and security lies in Greece's declared desire to expand unilaterally its territorial waters in the Aegean to 12 miles and thus gain control over the international sea, air and underwater space in the Aegean.

The net result of such a move by Greece, which already possesses approximately 42.5 per cent of the Aegean, would be to cut off Turkey, the other country bordering this sea, from international waters. The Turkish coast would be encircled by Greek territorial waters.

As a basis for this one-sided and threatening attitude, Greece cites the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In the first place, Turkey is not a party to this Convention. Secondly, it may be recalled that Turkey has consistently maintained its objection to the 12-mile limit for the breadth of the territorial sea in the context of semi-enclosed seas, where special circumstances prevail. Therefore, it is obvious that, in the special case of the Aegean, the 12-mile limit cannot be applied against Turkey, as if it were a rule that had acquired the character of customary law. Thirdly, the 12-mile limit envisaged in article 3 of the Convention is neither compulsory nor a limit to be applied automatically. It is the maximum permissible breadth that may be applied, as circumstances permit, within the limitation imposed by the general principle of international law, embodied in article 300 of the Convention: namely, the obligation to exercise rights in a manner that would not constitute an abuse of a right.

It was against this background that the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, on 8 June 1995, adopted a declaration expressing Turkey's legitimate concerns and its determination to defend its right in the face of Greek designs on the Aegean. It is this real threat that Greece tries to mask by fabricating the so-called Turkish threat.

With regard to the crisis over the Kardak rock, it was again Greece that unilaterally tried to gain sovereignty over these uninhabited islets by bringing civilians, soldiers and flags there. Turkey cannot and will not remain silent in the face of such blatant manoeuvres. At Kardak, Greece has attempted by *fait accompli*, and by creating precedents, to extend its sovereignty to islands beyond those ceded to it by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and the 1947 Treaty of Paris. The possession of small islands, islets and rocks in the Aegean, the status of which has not been defined by international documents, has yet to be determined. While Greece is attempting to create *faits accomplis*, the Government of Turkey is trying to convince Greece to examine — through negotiations, and if necessary, through appropriate dispute-settlement mechanisms — the status of such islets and rocks, previously undetermined by legal documents. Turkey does not exclude recourse to third-party settlements. It is Greece again that is playing the game of hypocrisy. Greece, while claiming that it accepts the

jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, has made a declaration excluding “measures of national defence” from the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court. This clearly shows that Greece has militarized islands in the Aegean in contravention of its obligations under international treaties, which give these islands a demilitarized status.

Thus, the Turkish Foreign Minister stated here in New York on 30 September that the bilateral problems between the two countries should be treated as a whole, and that the approach of à la carte choices would not be acceptable to Turkey. If Greece believes that the Kardak issue should be referred to the International Court of Justice, it should be equally prepared for a similar referral to the same Court of problems such as the militarization of the eastern Aegean islands and the claim of 10-mile airspace over the Aegean, in violation of the international treaties currently in force. As a matter of fact, the Greek Foreign Minister, Mr. Pangalos, immediately made a turnabout and rejected the idea of taking other bilateral problems with Turkey to the Court.

The Greek Foreign Minister also made certain allegations to the effect that Cyprus’s cultural and religious heritage was being harmed by Turks. It is ironic that this claim is made by a country in which 90 per cent of the Ottoman Turkish monuments, dating back more than 500 years, are physically neglected, abandoned or demolished. In Cyprus, it is in fact the Greek Cypriot side that destroyed the Turkish-Muslim heritage of the island during its 1963-1974 campaign of ethnic and cultural “cleansing”, and continues to do so even today. The Turkish Cypriot side has done a commendable job of preserving and protecting the cultural heritage of Northern Cyprus, and this fact is confirmed by a 1989 Council of Europe expert report on the cultural heritage of the island. In fact, we have here a document that shows the problem of the protection of the Ottoman Turkish heritage in Greece, and we would be very pleased to provide it to any interested delegation.

The distortion of facts naturally continues on the Cyprus issue. It is a long-standing attempt by the Greek side to mock the international community’s recall of the facts by pretending that the question of Cyprus emerged in 1974 as a result of the Turkish intervention against the attempt by the junta in Greece and by Greek Cypriots to annex the island to Greece. Why then, if the problem began in 1974, was the United Nations peacekeeping force sent to Cyprus in 1964? It is because Greek Cypriots began their systematic destruction of the partnership State of Cyprus at the very beginning of the foundation of the Republic in

1960. Between 1963 and 1974, the Turkish Cypriots were ousted from the Government and from all the institutions of the State they had co-founded. They were forced to live in enclaves as refugees in their homeland. They were subjected to intimidation, embargoes, massacres and even extermination plans, such as the infamous Akritas plan.

In consequence, since December 1963, the Republic of Cyprus has been a purely Greek Cypriot State and has no legal or moral right to claim to represent anyone except the Greek Cypriot people. Turkey’s legitimate intervention in 1974, after the Greek *coup d’état*, was based on the Treaty of Guarantee of 1960, to which Turkey, the United Kingdom, Greece, the Turkish Cypriot community and the Greek Cypriot community were parties.

I need only quote from the Greek Cypriot leader Archbishop Makarios, speaking before the United Nations Security Council on 19 July 1974 following the 15 July Greek coup.

**The President:** The Turkish representative’s time is up. May I therefore ask him to be kind enough to conclude his statement.

**Mr. Tanç** (Turkey): I shall be brief. I quote Archbishop Makarios:

“The military regime of Greece has callously violated the independence of Cyprus. [It has acted] without trace of respect for the democratic rights of the Cypriot people ...

“The coup caused much bloodshed ...

“[T]he events in Cyprus do not constitute an internal matter of the Greeks ... The Turks of Cyprus are also affected ... The whole people of Cyprus suffers ...” (*S/PV.1780, p. 7*)

I am reading only excerpts.

During the events of last August and September, three deaths were witnessed in Cyprus. It is again the view of my Government that this was the result of the policy of tension followed by the Greek Cypriot side. We think the best way to pursue a settlement in Cyprus is through the good offices of the Secretary-General. My delegation finds it difficult to understand why the Greek Foreign Minister’s statement contained so many unfounded allegations and contradictions. We do not

believe that the Minister's statement is compatible with the desire that he has expressed to establish normal neighbourly relations between Turkey and Greece. However, let us recall that the statement by the Turkish Foreign Minister expresses the hope for a meaningful, comprehensive and results-oriented dialogue and for mutual goodwill. We hope that this offer will be accepted. Such a process will also serve the principles of the United Nations as well as accepted norms of relations between States.

**Mr. Kaskarelis** (Greece): I do not think it is worth responding in detail to our Turkish colleague, because he repeated exactly what he said last year. I should like only to point out that the facts speak for themselves. For more than 20 years Turkey has been occupying by military force one third of the territory of Cyprus, an independent State Member of the United Nations, ignoring all the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Turkey also has an extremely negative record on human rights, as everyone is aware, and is continuing to pursue an expansionist policy in the region, ignoring international law and treaties.

**Mr. Moushoutas** (Cyprus): The representative of Turkey, in replying to the Foreign Minister of Greece, made reference to the question of Cyprus, a grave international problem involving invasion and occupation that is today inscribed on the agenda of this very session. The representative of Turkey — in a vain effort to eclipse Turkey from the scene of the crime against Cyprus — hides behind a fictitious entity, an entity that the Security Council called illegal. In fact, the Council called on all Member States to not have anything to do with it.

Unfortunately, however, for the Turkish representative, the United Nations membership has identified the question of Cyprus as an international problem and not a bicomunal dispute, and it has consistently adopted resolution after resolution in the General Assembly and in the Security Council. These resolutions call first and most importantly for the withdrawal from Cyprus of the occupying troops; the return of the refugees to their homes and lands; respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriots, whether they be Greek Cypriots or Turkish Cypriots; and respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus.

But Turkey, using the illegal entity that it put together in order to cloud its shameful and unacceptable activities in Cyprus, has caused the geographical and human division of Cyprus. The Turkish representative speaks about "cleansing". He is an expert on it, because his country has

been trying to do it in Cyprus since 1974. The Turkish policy in Cyprus is one of division, segregation and partition. It has forcefully caused the division of our people on ethnic and religious grounds. The presence in Cyprus of 35,000 Turkish troops, imposing this form of apartheid, is not only contrary to United Nations resolutions demanding the troops' withdrawal, but constitutes an affront to world public opinion. It also poses a formidable challenge to the Security Council — which has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security — to ensure compliance with its solemn decisions. The Security Council has called since 1975 for the withdrawal of the foreign troops from Cyprus. Today, not a single Turkish soldier has left the island, and what is more, Turkey has implanted in Cyprus 85,000 Turkish settlers from the mainland of Turkey.

The Turkish representative used the Treaty of Guarantee to justify this crime against humanity. The Treaty of Guarantee does not give Turkey the right to use military force to impose its will. If this Treaty were to give Turkey the right to use force, it would be contrary to Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations. So Turkey's actions are criminal and illegal.

I was truly shocked to hear the Turkish representative speaking with pride of human rights and respect for culture. I do not think that he chose the best time in history to bring this matter up. One cannot open a newspaper without reading about the inhumanity of the Turkish military to its own people and, of course, to the Cypriots, who recently committed the crime of protesting because for 22 years they have not been able to go to their homes and lands. And before the whole world, the Turkish army beat to death a young Cypriot and shot to death another.

**Mr. Tanç** (Turkey): As regards the statement just made by the previous speaker, his counterpart — the representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, His Excellency Mr. Osman Ertug — will respond to that statement in writing, and my delegation will circulate his response as an official document. As regards our Greek colleague's statement, I should like to finish what I was saying about Cyprus. The best statement on the situation there was made in the Security Council by Archbishop Makarios, the leader of the Greek Cypriot side:

"The military regime of Greece has callously violated the independence of Cyprus. Without trace of respect for the democratic rights of the Cypriot

people, without trace of respect for the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus, the Greek junta has extended its dictatorship to Cyprus ...

“The coup caused much bloodshed and took a great toll of human lives ...

“It was an invasion, which violated the independence and the sovereignty of the Republic ...

“As I have already stated, the events in Cyprus do not constitute an internal matter of the Greeks of Cyprus. The Turks of Cyprus are also affected. The coup of the Greek junta is an invasion, and from its consequences the whole people of Cyprus suffers, both Greeks and Turks.” (*S/PV.1780, p. 7*)

**Mr. Moushoutas** (Cyprus): I am sorry to speak again, but I want to confirm what I said earlier: that we have a situation involving a criminal who is trying in vain to eclipse himself from the crime and to put a puppet in his place to speak in his stead.

Security Council resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984) are very, very clear. They condemn that entity as illegal, and call on all Member States not to recognize it. Indeed, the entity is not recognized by any Member State except the country that perpetrated this great crime against Cyprus.

**Mr. Kaskarelis** (Greece): I should like to make a few brief comments. I wish to point out that as early as July 41974, the very first Security Council resolution adopted on Cyprus, immediately after the Turkish invasion, called for the withdrawal of the Turkish invasion troops from Cyprus. A considerable number of other resolutions followed, all insisting on the withdrawal of the Turkish occupation forces, the withdrawal of the Turkish settlers, the safe return of refugees, respect for human rights, accounting for missing persons, and many other issues. Unfortunately, Turkey has shown an impressive lack of respect for all of these resolutions.

**The President:** Since we have heard the last speaker in the general debate and in exercise of the right of reply, I shall now make a brief statement to conclude our general debate.

A total of 181 leaders participated in the general debate, which began on 23 September. Among them were 12 Heads of State, 1 Crown Prince, 17 Prime Ministers, 17 Deputy Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers, and 106 Foreign Ministers. This impressive list of speakers underlines once again the importance attached to the general debate — the only universal opportunity for leaders of the 185 Member States to share their views without fear or favour.

The major themes addressed during the debate cover all the pressing issues that define and challenge our roles as countries with specific interests and our understanding of the multidimensional nature of global issues. If we appear to be able to gravitate towards common definitions, we are not always clear about or united on common courses of action.

Many statements were made that reaffirmed the need to reform the United Nations and to restore its credibility and capacity to deliver, in order to enhance its relevance and applicability. The reform of the Security Council and the financial crisis besetting the United Nations were particularly stressed.

Many leaders underlined the critical issue of development, stressed the need for the United Nations to be the major forum for development cooperation, and elaborated on the need to address the issues of debt, trade, finance and the environment in an integrated manner. A number of leaders of Africa and other developing regions of the world, expressing fears of even greater marginalization, spoke of the need for the international community to support and assist them in their efforts towards economic and social progress and subsequent integration into the global economy.

The consideration of specific steps, including the elimination of nuclear weapons and the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, was a recurring theme. Disarmament in all its aspects, including the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, a ban on the export of anti-personnel mines, and the illicit arms trade, figured prominently.

The situation in the Middle East and other areas of conflict, such as in the Great Lakes region of Africa, the Balkans and Central Asia, were of major concern, as they threaten fragile peace accords, present and future generations, and opportunities for societies and States. There was a strong protest against the silent armies of the night that bring chaos, despair and destitution to innocent people. The issues of transboundary threats, including terrorism, drug trafficking and environmental pollution, were raised, together with issues relating to human rights, women, children, and the role of public information in an age of satellite communication.

The general debate has concluded a day ahead of schedule as a result of our collective determination to improve our methods of work and time management. There were only 27 plenary meetings instead of the estimated 30. According to the Secretariat, there has been a notional savings of some \$81,600 and other significant savings in overtime and other areas. The lessons we can learn from how we have managed our working methods should become an integral part of the work culture of the United Nations on a system-wide basis, and be committed to both by delegations and by the Secretariat. It should send a small but significant signal that we are seriously committed to enhancing the efficiency of the United Nations and that we are tired of being criticized by others on the outside.

Efficiency in our working methods is only a part of the task ahead. The work in the Committees and the plenary, and the level and manner of decision-making there, will determine the quality of our output and make a big difference. Committee and plenary work at the lowest common denominator would have no meaning and would fail to have an impact on real-life issues and the real world. I need add that work in the Committees and the plenary precedes what we will collectively examine in the Working Groups, and that the United Nations will be judged first by what we do in the Committees and the plenary, notwithstanding the strong interest in and focus on the work we do in the Working Groups.

Another 68 days remain before the session adjourns on 17 December, and 272 before the end of the fifty-first session. This sets the time-frame within which delegations are encouraged to meet some of the challenges that were so eloquently defined by the political leaders who began this fifty-first session. I look forward to the continued commitment and constructive cooperation of all in ensuring that this session is productive by reinvigorating the United Nations.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 9?

*It was so decided.*

### **Programme of work**

**The President:** First, I should like to announce that the consideration of item 36, entitled "International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters", originally scheduled as the second item for Monday, 14 October, in the morning, is postponed to a later date, to be announced. I should also like to inform members that on Monday, 14 October, as the second item, the Assembly will begin consideration of agenda item 98, entitled "Operational activities for development". Under this item, it will take up the report (A/51/256) of the Secretary-General on progress at mid-decade on implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children. This will be for the purpose of hearing a statement by the Secretary-General. The speakers for this item will be heard on Tuesday, 15 October, in the morning, as the second item, as originally scheduled.

Agenda item 25, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community", will be considered on Monday, 11 November, in the morning, as the second item, instead of being considered on Thursday, 24 October, as originally scheduled. Agenda item 26, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization" will also be taken up on Monday, 11 November, in the morning, as the third item.

I should like to remind delegations that the election of 18 members of the Economic and Social Council will take place on Thursday, 31 October, in the morning. All the changes and additions announced since the issuance of document A/INF/51/3 will be incorporated in the revised version of the document, which will be issued on Monday 14 October.

May I further inform members of the Assembly that the voluntary contributions to the 1997 programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will now take place on Friday, 8 November, in the morning, instead of on Wednesday 13 November, as originally scheduled.

*The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.*