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GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FORTY-SEVENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 23 October 1985, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. DE PINIÉS (Spain)
later: Mr. MOSELEY (Vice-President) (Barbados)

- Commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations [39]
(continued)

Statements were made by:

General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
General António Ramalho Eanes, President of the Portuguese Republic
The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada
Mr. Jacques Santer, Prime Minister of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

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The Right Honourable Sir Lynden O. Pindling, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas

The Right Honourable Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, Prime Minister and Minister for Civil Aviation of Fiji

Mr. G. M. V. van Aardenne, Deputy Prime Minister and Special Envoy of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Mr. Giulio Andreotti, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Special Envoy of the President of the Italian Republic

Mr. Laurent Nzeyimana, Minister for External Relations and Co-operation, and Special Envoy of the President of the Republic of Burundi

Mr. Hussein Abdullah Al-Aawri, Minister for Education and Special Envoy of the President of the Yemen Arab Republic

Mr. Siméon Aké, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Special Envoy of the President of the Republic of the Ivory Coast

(Mr. van Aerdenne, Netherlands)

"My colleagues from ... the Netherlands Antilles and I solemnly rededicate ourselves to the Charter.

"We repeat our promise to contribute with all our energy to the establishment of peace and security.

"We accept the provisions of the Charter for the peaceful settlement of international conflicts.

"We promise to strive for the goal of general and complete disarmament.

"We accept the obligation of the Charter to work for the respect for and the strengthening of international law.

"We support the new development strategy.

...

"We shall live up to the objectives of the United Nations and we shall support every effort to make the United Nations a more effective instrument for peace, justice and progress.

"May God grant that our work will redound to the benefit of mankind."

(A/PV.1874, paras. 63-68, 70, 71)

MR. ANDREOTTI (Italy) (interpretation from French): This meeting is not only an occasion for celebration but, also an occasion for reflecting on and renewing our commitment to the values which unite us.

The year 1945 remains indelibly imprinted on the minds of peoples and individuals. At the time that the most tragic and devastating of global conflicts was ending and the dawn of a new hope was breaking over the world, the atomic era was beginning: an event whose immense significance it is difficult, from a distance of 40 years, to calculate exactly, but which nevertheless introduced into international life, besides fantastic possibilities for peaceful progress, disquieting shadows over the future of the Earth.

(Mr. Adreotti, Italy)

Against this background the United Nations was born. The idea of a universal organization to replace the League of Nations was conceived amid the ruins of war; it was therefore logical that its primary purpose should be to avoid a third and even more disastrous conflict by establishing a system of collective peace and security. These objectives are clearly stated in the preamble to the San Francisco Charter, which affirms the determination of the peoples of the United Nations "... to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

The founders of the United Nations, however, did not confine themselves to the enunciation of ideals and principles. They also laid down a practical and articulated system of norms of conduct, of means of promoting the search for peaceful solutions and of measures aimed at preventing conflicts and restoring peace. This system - it is well to recall - involves a commitment by all Members of the Organization, without distinction, to refrain from the threat or use of force in their international relations.

The San Francisco Charter also introduced - and this was an innovation of profound historical significance - the principles of equality and self-determination of peoples, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and international solidarity in economic, social, cultural and humanitarian development. This set of principles form a whole that cannot be divided arbitrarily or considered in a selective manner. These principles have been applied in practice by the United Nations and its specialized agencies which, in fact, cover every aspect of human activity that can be organized on the international level.

Forty years after the founding of the United Nations it is appropriate to ask ourselves whether and how the Organization has fulfilled the historic tasks assigned to it.

(Mr. Adreotti, Italy)

Today we have from different quarters criticism - some of it harsh - of the United Nations system. In some cases we may feel a real sense of disillusionment about the machinery, the limitations and even the values of multilateralism.

In spite of all this, the United Nations has been a constant, irreplaceable meeting point, a highway along which we may direct our vast international energies towards peace, co-operation and progress.

Notwithstanding its undeniable shortcomings, the role of the United Nations in the defence of peace and security, in the preservation of areas of stability and in the search for negotiated solutions, has been of fundamental importance in the last 40 years. When the United Nations has failed in its mission, it has not been through lack of will, but rather because the action of its organs has been impeded by the clash of political views, because its recommendations have been disregarded, and because selfish interests have prevailed over the interests of peace, security and co-operation.

While it is proper to refer to these failures, it is also fair to admit that in many other cases, the organs of the United Nations have been able to make full use of the powers conferred upon them by the Charter and have shown themselves capable of effective and long-term action.

In this connection, we must recall, first, the peace-keeping operations, some of which are still going on and in which Italy is proud to have played an active role.

Secondly, the United Nations, we must also recall, has acted as host for or encouraged negotiations on the main controversies which beset mankind, negotiations which still represent the surest and most reliable reference point for the parties concerned.

(Mr. Adreotti, Italy)

Finally, we remember with admiration and respect the initiatives taken by the Secretaries-General from 1945 onwards as splendid examples of wisdom and dedication to peace.

Apart from these peace-keeping operations, the United Nations deserves our gratitude for the vast and important range of activities it has undertaken in favour of decolonization, economic, social and cultural progress, and human rights.

The historical process which has brought independence to so many peoples has found in the United Nations a political reference point that has proved quite irreplaceable. Within the United Nations the newly independent countries have encountered not only a forum for meetings and debates but the surest means of presenting their views to an international audience.

In this context, the results of the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies have been and remain impressive. How can we forget the eradication of formerly invincible diseases, the improvement of child health, the assistance provided to some countries in connection with their drug-control efforts so as to induce farmers to grow substitute crops, the economic and social rehabilitation of depressed areas, the work done to combat the terrible scourges of drought and hunger in Africa and other regions of the globe, and the defence of human rights and freedoms that have been violated.

Just as impressive has been the work done in the field of legislation. This has resulted in a very important series of documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and then the Convention on Human Rights, the Convention on the Law of the Sea and the major agreements on the control and limitation of armaments, which have become part of our collective conscience and an essential component of our modern civilization.

(Mr. Adreotti, Italy)

Rather than ask ourselves what the United Nations has failed to do, we should ask ourselves today what the world would be like if the United Nations had never existed. We should do so, not in order to contemplate with sterile complacency the results achieved, nor in order to close our eyes to the defects and failures of the collective system, but rather to find the inspiration for a renewed commitment to the values which the United Nations embodies and defends.

The world has certainly become smaller and more dangerous, but also richer in possibilities.

In these 40 years there have occurred irreversible examples of freedom and of national and individual progress. And here also lies the merit of those who, in 1945, launched us on our great adventure. Their aim was certainly to prevent war, but also to open up before the world the hope of improving the human condition. In this new situation we are perceiving ever more clearly the interdependence which now binds, for better or worse, all the countries of the world, brought closer together by the possibility of instant communication, the unprecedented increase in human, cultural and commercial exchanges, and the global nature of world security.

The question of economic co-operation arises here as elsewhere in the world. We are all well aware of this. Many statements made before this Assembly during the present session have dealt with economic problems and with indebtedness.

The idea of the interdependence of actions taken in the economic field has also been put forward. It has had the advantage of posing the problem of well-being as a problem whose solution depends on international co-operation.

(Mr. Andreotti, Italy)

Nowhere more than in the economic field must we be wary of misleading perspectives. The economic health of each presupposes above all that wealth is produced. In a world open to co-operation, this may be obtained in conformity with the principle of the optimum distribution of the factors of production. However costly they may be in political, economic and social terms, the processes of positive and negative adjustments must go forward.

It is here, it seems to me, that interdependence lies. The political action of Governments, that of the international financial institutions and the banking system must be consistent with this objective. We look to international trade as a vehicle of well-being. No one can think, without deceiving themselves, that they can shift their difficulties on to others. The path of protectionism is the easiest, but it is also the path of nationalism which is first economic, and then political.

No State, however great, can escape this requirement. No one, however rich, can act alone on the world stage.

Ours is an imperfect community, like all communities made by men, not always capable of banishing egoism and violence from their own hearts. In its organized form, which finds in the United Nations its universal expression, our community has been endowed with a wealth of idealism. People with different backgrounds, different histories, different political, cultural and religious formations, are called upon to get to know each other and to debate in this great arena common principles and common rules of conduct.

Our Organization can be improved in ways suggested by experience. We perceive that the real problem is one of political will.

The maintenance of peace can be pursued by applying faithfully the principles which are ours, by using our machinery. The powers which the Charter confers on the organs of the United Nations - and I have in mind in particular the Security

(Mr. Andreotti, Italy)

Council and the Secretary-General - are extensive. Effective action by the Security Council is essential.

The General Assembly which, according to the Charter, is a truly sovereign organ, bearing within itself the potentialities derived from its being an equal and democratic forum, must direct its debates and its resolutions towards more precise and more productive objectives.

If everyone displays this necessary political will and with the appropriate procedural amendments now under study, it will certainly be possible to make of this Organization the highest and most significant point of international co-operation.

Italy firmly believes in multilateral co-operation and its own conduct is strictly inspired by this belief.

Since its foundation, the Italian Republic, born of resistance to domination and tyranny, has endorsed even in its Constitution the great ideals which inspire the San Francisco Charter. Today, Italy is an open, democratic country, advancing progressively and strongly inspired by the ideals of international solidarity. In Italy, human rights and basic freedoms play a fundamental role both in respect of our own citizens and of people of any other nationality. In our relations with our neighbours, we have strictly followed the path of peaceful negotiations, obtaining results of which we are proud and which constitute a positive contribution to the maintenance of conditions of peace and stability. We have based our action in the world context on our ideals of solidarity and international co-operation.

Based on the same principles is our participation in the Atlantic Alliance, an example of that association for regional security which is fully recognized in the Charter, and our wholehearted participation in the European Community is also derived from those principles - a strong Community composed of countries which have

(Mr. Andreotti, Italy)

rediscovered their identity and their history, overcoming old rivalries and profiting from their common heritage; an open Community which does not retreat into itself but which strives, through the development of its relations with third countries, to strengthen conditions for generalized well-being and world peace.

Our Organization today must face terrible and sometimes agonizing challenges. I am thinking of the struggle against terrorism, which must be conducted with determination; I am thinking of the struggle against the scourge of drugs, which threatens our younger generations and which cannot be relaxed; I am thinking, finally, of the struggle against hunger which must be won, if we wish to eliminate forever the main causes of the uncertainty and insecurity threatening our prospects for the future.

I should like to conclude by quoting the words spoken in 1945, in the first Parliamentary Assembly of the reborn Italian democracy, by Alcide De Gasperi. Commenting on the moral testament of President Roosevelt, he said:

"Italy recognizes that a just and fruitful peace can be founded only on the principles and purposes for the achievement of which the United Nations has fought war; and, in particular, on respect for international law, on faith in the dignity, worth and rights of the human person and on the assurance that all nations enjoy the essential human freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want - which generates a healthy and peaceful life for the inhabitants of every country in every part of the world - and freedom from the fear of any act of aggression by any country against any other: the four freedoms!

"This is not a vision of a distant Utopia. Let us work to ensure that nobody can doubt it."