

5



GA/5988
18 September 1979

STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SALIM A. SALIM,
AT OPENING OF THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION, 18 SEPTEMBER

I am deeply moved by the confidence you have demonstrated in electing me President of the thirty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly. I consider this unanimous decision as a tribute and honour to my country, the United Republic of Tanzania, whose Government and people have steadfastly and consistently supported the United Nations and actively worked for the implementation of the principles and purposes for which our Organization stands. It is also a recognition to my continent and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which through their trust in me made this election possible.

The Presidency of the General Assembly is a heavy responsibility, but in the discharge of this responsibility I am following a tradition and a line of very distinguished personalities whose qualities of excellence I can only attempt to emulate, and from whose achievements and accumulated wisdom I intend to learn and profit.

I also know I can count on the advice and co-operation of my immediate predecessor, Ambassador Indalecio Lievano, who presided over the thirty-third session with such distinction, dedication and skill. In recognizing his contribution, I pay tribute to a distinguished diplomat and an outstanding spokesman for justice and international amity.

For over nine years now, I have had the honour and privilege of representing my country at this Organization. This period has not only given me the opportunity to know more about the United Nations at close quarters, its successes and shortcomings, but has also afforded me the opportunity to make acquaintances and develop friendship and co-operation with many outstanding personalities, including a great many who are in this Assembly.

Among the relationships which I will always cherish has been my close association with our Secretary-General, Dr. Kurt Waldheim. I have been particularly privileged to work closely with him on many issues of common concern to the Organization in my capacity as Chairman of the Special Committee on decolonization, and during the period that I was honoured to represent Tanzania in the Security Council. His total dedication to our Organization, his commitment to the cause of freedom, justice and peace, as well as his over-all appreciation and management of delicate situations are rightly admired. I therefore feel very much encouraged that I can look

(more)

forward to his continued co-operation and assistance, as well as the co-operation of all members of the Secretariat in the fulfilment of my responsibilities.

With deep sorrow and grief, we have learnt of the most untimely passing away last week of His Excellency Dr. Agostinho Neto, President of the People's Republic of Angola. This untimely death of President Neto has robbed Angola of its founding father and illustrious leader; Africa of its vanguard freedom fighter and valiant revolutionary and the world of an outstanding statesman.

I have had the unique honour of personally knowing President Neto, both in the course of the liberation struggle in Angola and after the liberation of that country. He was undoubtedly one of Africa's towering figures. His modesty and simplicity were remarkable. Angola, Africa and the international community are certainly poorer today with his passing away. I wish, therefore, to take this opportunity to associate myself with the remarks made by the outgoing President of the General Assembly and to convey my deepfelt condolences to the family of President Neto, to the MPLA Worker's Party, the Government and people of Angola, as we mourn this irreparable loss.

The current international situation imposes on the United Nations a heavy and urgent responsibility for action in many areas if we are to dispel the gloom that is now overshadowing the world; if we are to regain hope for mankind in the efficaciousness of international mechanisms to solve urgent problems and bring peace and justice to humanity.

Today is not the darkest hour of mankind nor is it a sunny day. For it is still one of the unpleasant facts that millions of the world population continue to live in economic misery and other deprivations; many others, especially in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, are suffering from the humiliation of being a subject people under colonialism, racism, and other forms of domination and indignities.

In another area, disarmament talks continue to take place against the background of the philosophy of security through balance of terror. It is no wonder therefore that the arms race, and the danger this poses to international security, the waste it brings in the use of resources, continues unabated. Above all, the conditions which have created and perpetuated the great divide between the North and the South have now been accentuated under global recession and inflation, resulting in the further condemnation of millions of the world's peoples to absolute poverty in perpetuity, without hope of reprieve.

Yet the irony is that year in and year out the nations represented in this Assembly pledge themselves to work for a humane and more just order. But it is precisely because the situation continues to be wanting, and in some cases even has worsened, that we find ourselves again with the same tasks unaccomplished, the problems unmitigated and some even solution-resistant!

How is it that despite our commitment to work towards a new international economic order, meaningful action continues to elude the community of nations resulting in the deterioration of international economic relations? Why is it

(more)

that despite our collective abhorrence of racialism and condemnation of colonialism, this twin evil still prevails in southern Africa? These and many other pertinent questions cry out for genuine answers.

These are questions that touch on the daily lives of the people we represent as indeed they affect the very peace and security of our world. At any given time these questions are pertinent and prescient. But I would suggest that they are even more relevant today, considering that our session is taking place on the threshold of a new decade, as another decade is fading away. For it must be our collective objective and endeavour to prepare grounds for a better and more just order as we enter the 1980s. I think this should be the beacon to guide the United Nations during this session so that the coming decade should be recorded in the annals of history as the decade that turned dialogue into action, promise into fulfilment.

The United Nations came into being after the war which had borne witness to vast destruction of human life, institutions and property. Nations which were gathered in San Francisco for the signing of the Charter were guided by their apprehension of the inherent vulnerability of a fragmented world. They were also guided by the desire of their peoples that this world be a more secure place to live in through the reduction of conflict. Hence, the vigorous promotion of the ideal of liberation, human rights, equality, dignity and justice, as elements conducive to a stable and peaceful order.

Today, over three decades later, the community of independent nations represented here has increased threefold. This in itself is eloquent testimony to the relevance of the United Nations Organization. It represents a realization that only in circumstances of unity and collective effort can it be possible to make the world more peaceful. After its formation, this Organization has not only survived more than 30 years, but remains the only effective and meaningful institution for international dialogue and co-operation. The truth is that all our political, social and economic differences notwithstanding, we have continued to have faith in the United Nations and turned to it for solutions in times of difficulties.

But this Organization will fail to meet its lofty ideals as enunciated in its Charter if we as individual nations choose to use it as an instrument of periodical convenience. It will only meet our expectations if we proceed deliberately to build it and use it as the instrument for the reconciliation of our differences for all time and as the option of unilateral action predicated on the use of force becomes less and less attractive, because of its futility.

In the final analysis, therefore, the existence and the conduct of this Organization rest on the will of nations. Its making or unmaking is the responsibility of the Member States. Thus, the failure of the international community in resolving some of the major problems and conflicts is a failure of its constituent Member States, both individually and collectively. Much remains to be done by nations to translate their faith in the United Nations into concrete action. Nations still need to demonstrate greater political

(more)

will which is an essential asset in the establishment of a more secure world in which nations, big and small, can contribute in the implementation of the goals and objectives of the United Nations Charter.

To date, the world is entangled in conflicts and nobody can claim that peace, freedom, human equality, dignity and justice have triumphed. The General Assembly has a duty to address itself to the root causes of these conflicts in order to formulate and implement measures aimed at resolving them. For unless we go into the root cause of the problems, real peace will continue to elude us.

Of all the needs of our time, the greatest is peace. Peace for the individual so that he can live out his existence without fear for his life. Peace for each nation to live with its neighbours without fear for its national life. Peace for the world derived from an arrangement for interaction between the nations of the world without fear of survival. Peace such as this provides for freedom and justice for every individual and every nation. Peace such as this provides for human rights for everyone within all nations and for equal rights for each nation within the international community.

All nations have underlined their commitment to the promotion of human rights. This commitment has found expression specifically in the numerous covenants, declarations and resolutions adopted by Member States of this Organization. Regimes which have consistently denied their people such rights have been condemned. It is nonetheless regrettable that violations of human rights in various forms still continue to exist.

And nowhere has such violations taken such a massive and grotesque form as in southern Africa where institutionalized racism is entrenched and where a human being is judged, not by his contribution to society, not by his humanity, but by the pigmentation of his skin and the origin of his race.

But whether in Africa or elsewhere on the globe, the people who have been denied their fundamental rights have not failed to resist such oppression, humiliation and exploitation. This resistance has taken different forms, including, as a last resort, armed struggle. To those millions of oppressed people who suffer the ordeal of colonialism and racist domination, and to millions more elsewhere who languish under foreign occupation, they have known no peace and no reprieve from burdens of living. These situations are a negation of peace; indeed, they constitute a threat to it in that they affect the security of the world as a whole.

It is therefore only logical that Member States of this Organization have not been found lacking in their support for the struggle waged by liberation movements against the systems and regimes practising the obnoxious policies of colonialism, foreign occupation and apartheid.

The conflict in southern Africa is about the choice between domination and freedom, apartheid and non-racialism, inhumanity and human dignity. It concerns the right of all human beings to freedom and equality regardless of

race or colour. It is a struggle which must be of concern to all of us, for the negation of humanity anywhere is a negation of humanity everywhere. To the people of that part of the world, it has meant a perpetual nightmare of constant resistance against oppression by the racist white minority regimes.

This constant oppression of the people of southern Africa is equally an arrogant repudiation of international norms and a scorn to civilization. It becomes a challenge therefore to the civilized world to put an end to this tragic absurdity.

The pernicious system of apartheid and its brutal instruments of repression and oppression of the African people continue to reign supreme. The continued illegal occupation of Namibia by the South African regime in defiance of international law and the will of the international community and in total obstruction of the United Nations' plan for the independence of that Territory, the deteriorating and uncertain situation in Zimbabwe are all clear manifestations of the shortcomings that face our Organization in our collective search for freedom and human dignity.

Yet, as we lament our failures, we must also recognize the achievements that our Organization has made in the field of decolonization. Indeed, there is no doubt that the process of decolonization has been one of the glorious chapters of the United Nations. The very growth of our membership to its present level testifies to this process.

Next year we shall be commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. That occasion will be significant in that it will provide an opportunity for nations to reaffirm their unflinching support for decolonization. The world community will also be able to review strategies in conformity with the contemporary realities with a view to liquidating the last and remaining vestiges of colonialism and racism.

In the Middle East, the situation remains fluid and complex. Recent developments have given birth to new realities and also new problems which have to be reckoned with while the international community endeavours to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict. It must however be stressed that peace in the Middle East will continue to elude the area if the root cause of the conflict is not taken fully into account. The core of the Middle East problem is the continued denial of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to establish an independent state.

The realization of that right, the refusal to give legitimacy to the fruits of conquest, the respect of the right of all States in the area to an independent existence, are conditions necessary for the attainment of a genuine, viable and permanent peace in the region. Furthermore, it is evident that in the search for such a just solution, the role of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the representative of the Palestinian people, is pivotal. It is the responsibility of all nations to give unlimited support

(more)

and encouragement to all efforts designed to attain this objective. It is my hope that during this Assembly we shall be able to make a contribution towards that end.

The tragic situation in Lebanon continues to cause serious concern to the international community. The senseless bombings of civilian targets causing considerable loss of life and destruction further threaten the peace and security of the region. The world community must redouble its efforts to bring an end to this tragedy so that the freedom, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon are respected.

In Cyprus the situation remains polarized. It is regrettable that despite the efforts of the United Nations, there seems to be no end in sight to the tragedy of Cyprus. The international community must redouble its efforts in support of a solution which will ensure the respect for the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-alignment of Cyprus, as well as a new era of harmony between the two communities. But whatever the intentions and actions of the United Nations, these cannot be a substitute for the efforts and determination of the Cypriot people themselves.

I am therefore taking this opportunity of appealing on behalf of the United Nations to the Cypriot leaders to promote a more meaningful and effective dialogue in order to bring to an end the tragedy which faces their country. In this respect, it is regrettable that the positive dialogue undertaken earlier this year between President Kyprianou and the leader of the Turkish community, Mr. Denktash, at the initiative of the Secretary-General, has not been followed up by the parties concerned. It is my hope that the spirit which permeated those talks will be revived in the interest of Cyprus and its people.

I would now like to turn to one of the serious problems which has rightly preoccupied the attention of the international community, namely, the growth of the refugee population. When people are denied their rights, they feel insecure. But so do those who deny them these rights. As a result of the combination of fear, on the one hand, and political, cultural, economic and sometimes religious persecution or deprivation, on the other, more and more people are fleeing their national territories. International and regional conflicts have increased the tempo and circumstances of flight. With over 10 million refugees, the world has not seen so many, in peace time, a crying testimony of man's inhumanity to man.

The United Nations, through its office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, has done a great deal to alleviate the plight of refugees. But Member States can and should do more to stem the tide of refugees and to ameliorate their condition. They can respond as required by accepting their humanitarian obligation to receive and protect the people affected. They can also help by increasing their contribution to the resources of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. But above all, they can make such human flights unnecessary in two ways. Firstly, on the national level, they can observe or enforce the various covenants and norms of human conduct and government responsibility, so that none of their citizens will be obliged, for whatever reasons, to vote with the feet! Secondly, they can uphold the

(more)

principles of the Charter of our Organization, resolve international disputes peacefully and build constructive relations with neighbours and within regions. In this way, they will make human migration across frontiers unnecessary.

The United Nations is an instrument of peace. It was established primarily to promote this objective. But the achievement of this goal continues to be frustrated by the development of new and even more sophisticated means of human destruction. That is why peace cannot be considered without reference to the instruments of war.

Despite detente and the spirit of rapprochement among the great Powers, the world is still living in a very fragile peace. For while the international atmosphere has certainly improved as a result of the reduction of tension among the major Powers, the danger of a nuclear war has not been eliminated. For some time now, the final objective of the efforts of all States has been general and complete disarmament under effective international control, while the immediate goal is to eliminate the danger of nuclear war, to halt and reverse the arms race and to clear the path towards lasting peace.

The relaxation of international tensions through detente and peaceful coexistence has contributed greatly towards this process and also towards the initiation of other negotiations. Today, the mutual reduction of forces in Europe, the Conference on European Security and Co-operation and the implementation of the Declaration on the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace and SALT negotiations, are characteristic of the attempts to establish a new era of peace. While co-operation should replace confrontation, there is need to ensure that this co-operation is universal and not confined to a group of nations. It should ensure the establishment of a more secure world in which peace is based on lesser dependence on armaments, and not on the outmoded theory of the balance of terror and mutual destruction. It should also ensure the participation of all nations in determining the modalities of peace, taking into consideration the sovereignty and independence of all the nations -- big and small.

The entire international community has come to realize that international peace and security is indivisible. It has to be total and global to be viable and lasting. This must enable nations to give priority to the economic well-being of the world's people instead of piling up armaments.

Disarmament, decolonization and human rights are not the only ingredients of international security. Lasting peace can only be ensured if it is also based on a foundation of economic justice and equality. It is in recognition of this principle that at the sixth special session of the General Assembly, the international community proclaimed its determination to work urgently for the establishment of the new international economic order based on sovereign equality, interdependence, common interest and co-operation among all States. For we cannot talk of political and civic rights in isolation from economic and social rights.

Today, the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations is being convened at a most critical moment in the history of on-going

(more)

North/South dialogue and international economic negotiation processes. In this year alone, the entire question of international economic relations has been examined in several major world conferences. The Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77 in Arusha, the Fifth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in Manila, the Preparatory Committee for the New International Development Strategy, the United Nations Committee of the Whole established under General Assembly resolution 32/174, the Northern Economic Summit in Tokyo, the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council of 1979, the FAO World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, also in Lusaka at the Commonwealth Summit as well as in Havana at the Sixth Summit Conference of Non-Aligned States.

But I think the time has come when the realm of dialogue has to give way to the realm of action. The discussions in various fora on a new international order have been long and comprehensive. They have been able to isolate and bring into focus many practical areas of international co-operation to make interdependence a reality. These practical elements continue to be denied application through the pursuit of narrow, short-term interests. The political will to implement solutions which have obtained overwhelming advocacy continues to be lacking from those we expect to lead in shaping this world into a truly interdependent one, mutually supportive and reinforcing.

Many decisions and resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations have remained by and large unimplemented. Dialogue must produce concrete results or confrontation becomes inevitable. As my President, Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, in his address at Howard University in August 1977 said: "Confrontation is not a desired strategy of the weak; but if reason, justice and dialogue all fail to bring international changes needed to win the war against world poverty, then economic conflict is bound to follow".

We are meeting at a time when the final days of this decade are closing. This decade has been a decade of serious economic negotiations, yet the international economic situation of low growth rates, run-away inflation, unemployment, serious balance of payments difficulties, particularly for the developing countries, has persisted. The gap between rich and poor nations is widening and will continue to do so. But more importantly, living standards in developing countries, particularly among the poorest, are falling. Conditions that have given rise to abject poverty are worsening instead of ameliorating, out of a combination of many factors, both new and old.

The experience of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade, which is soon coming to an end, should guide us in our deliberations for the preparation of the new strategy for the Third Decade. All available data demonstrates clearly that the present strategy has miserably failed in meeting the aspirations of the developing countries. The existing strategy was based on the notion that the development of the developing countries could be achieved through the transmission or "trickle down" of growth from the developed countries. This process has not only failed to bring about meaningful changes, but has indeed served to

(more)

perpetuate the dependence of the developing countries on the developed ones instead of promoting independence.

The present strategy has failed to bring about meaningful changes in international economic relations because it did not address itself to fundamental structural changes in the existing international economic system. As we move to the next decade, therefore, these fundamental structural changes should be the target of negotiations in the preparation of the new strategy. The new strategy must indeed be designed to promote the development of the developing countries, and it should be formulated within the framework of and directed to achieve the objectives of the new international economic order in all its aspects -- international trade, commodities, transfer of real resources, science and technology, industrialization, food and agriculture, and promoting economic and technical co-operation among developing countries.

It is said that knowledge of the past is essential in order to understand the present and plan for the future. I submit that this truism is equally relevant in the context of our quest for a new international economic order. We must properly diagnose the pitfalls and set-backs of the present decade, whether in the realm of political changes or the domain of economic problems, so as to equip ourselves to confront and overcome the challenges of the next decade -- the decade of the 1980s.

This decade has been one of the most eventful. The world has been through political turmoil which has perhaps changed to an extent the structures and the balance of power. Developing nations are increasingly demanding their rightful share and participation in international politics, as well as in international economics.

The non-aligned movement, in which the overwhelming majority of the third world countries are represented, has played a vanguard role in the struggle for democratization of international relations and establishment of a new international economic order based on equity, justice, mutual benefit and genuine interdependence. Only nine days ago, the heads of State and Government of the non-aligned countries at their Sixth Summit Conference in Havana gave a fresh and dynamic impetus and momentum to these lofty goals. As a result of these efforts, coupled with imaginative leadership displayed in some sections of the developed world, the need for change is no longer contested. Rather, it is the nature and pace of that change which continue to encounter varied reactions, which in some cases border on obstruction.

The challenge of the 1980s, therefore, must first and foremost include how to make good the necessary changes. In this context, it behoves upon those countries which, while professing acceptance of change, continue to cling to policies geared to the maintenance of the status quo, to desist from such policies and join the mainstream of the world community. At the same time, it should be emphasized that for such changes to be meaningful, they must be all-encompassing.

Both the developed and the developing countries must play their part in ensuring that the changes we seek result in the greatest moral and material benefits for our peoples. Above all, it must be stressed that certain

(more)

prerequisites are basic to the very foundation of the new order that we are all aspiring for. Thus, it would not be enough to demand national rights without ensuring human rights within nations. It would likewise be of limited effect if nations demand change and embark on the establishment of new international norms without establishing corresponding ones at the national level. We must aim at the strengthening of national foundations of power and the elimination of glaring inequalities between peoples within nations and between nations.

There is no better instrument, or for that matter no real alternative institution for bringing about such change, than the United Nations. The United Nations is the most representative institution, particularly considering that the goal of universality is almost within our reach. We must therefore endeavour to ensure that the United Nations family of organizations is equipped to face the new challenges. To make it accommodative to such change, it is necessary to provide for broader and enhanced participation of all nations. It is equally imperative to ensure the democratization of the United Nations institutions. Above all, we must work to improve the effectiveness of our Organization. This becomes all the more relevant when we take into account the fact that the United Nations today faces what has been described as a crisis of confidence.

We in this Assembly can make a sound beginning towards that objective by ensuring that our deliberations and the decisions we arrive at enhance the United Nations as an instrument for the promotion of peace, freedom, justice, international security and international co-operation. Perhaps the time has come that we should be more concerned in the implementation of the decisions that we arrive at rather than in the proliferation of the resolutions that we adopt. We should also aim, wherever possible, to adopt decisions which will mobilize the capabilities and meet the aspirations of the people we represent. Equally important, we must seek to involve the commitment of world public opinion towards the noble goals to which the United Nations is committed, that is to say, universal freedom, equality and justice -- in a word, genuine peace.

The hope for peace burns eternal in the breast of mankind. The quest for enduring peace is an arduous but glorious crusade, bringing together all nations of different political persuasion and diverse cultures in one splendid and fulfilling march.

There is not, and never has been, any one cause of war. But never in the recent history of man and international intercourse have there been so many causes for war as prevail today. I have referred to some of them: the monumental poverty of two thirds of the world's people, the widespread deprivation of political and human rights, the escalating arms race and the refusal to respect the sovereignty of others, including their sovereignty over their national resources.

(more)

Each and every one of these represents a stream of potential unrest, impatience and revolt. Their confluence could be the flood waters of world instability and war. But that confluence could also be turned into a giant dam of mankind's hope for development and peace.

Our United Nations was instituted to promote that second challenge. It is not beyond the will of man or nation to work for peace. I believe that our Organization is capable of strengthening this will. With your co-operation we can make this thirty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly a turning point in man's eternal journey towards freedom, unity, equality and co-operation -- the true cornerstones of peace. And I could think of no better way of crowning a year which the United Nations has dedicated as the International Year of the Child to strengthen our commitment to these lofty objectives.

* *** *