

22nd Session

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by Sardar Swaran Singh

Mr. President, may I begin by saying how pleased we are to see you as the President of the General Assembly. In conveying our greetings and felicitations to you on your assuming this high office, my delegation salutes your great nation, which has been known as a bridge-builder and apath-finder in Europe, both in the field of science and in culture. The first socialist representative to be the President of this Assembly, you are well known to all of us here as an outstanding statesman. We have also great pleasure in paying tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Pazhwak, who represents our friendly neighbour, Afghanistan, and who has had the unique record of presiding over three sessions of the General Assembly in one year with great distinction.

All my colleagues who have spoken so far during this session have underlined what our Secretary-General, U Thant, has stated in the introduction to his annual report this year. He said: "The picture...of what I regard as the most significant developments in the United Nations during the last twelve months is, on the whole, a discouraging one." [A/6701/Add.1, para. 148.] He went on to say: "We now again see violence, threats, incitement, intimidation and even hatred being used as weapons of policy in increasingly numerous areas of the world." [Ibid., para. 150.]

The months that have elapsed between the closure of the twenty-first session and the commencement of the twenty-second session have seen two extraordinary sessions of the United Nations General Assembly-the fifth special session to deal with the problem of South West Africa and the fifth emergency special session necessitated by the war in West Asia. We have, therefore, witnessed the unusual spectacle of a more or less continuous year-long General Assembly session. During this period, the Security Council also has been kept busy. And while all the

discussions, deliberations and multilateral negotiations go on at the United Nations Headquarters, and as the involvement of the United Nations becomes increasingly deeper in problems connected with almost all fields of human activity throughout the world, we also hear doubts and hesitations about the capability of the United Nations to take meaningful action to cure and heal or to function effectively in situations of serious crisis.

At no time in its history has the United Nations faced such a critical situation for peace and such challenges to its cherished principles as it does today. A brief but savage war has taken place in West Asia causing suffering and misery to hundreds of thousands of persons. A long and vicious armed conflict is raging in South-West Asia which, if not checked, will certainly lead to a much wider conflagration. In southern Africa colonialism and racism are still rampant. The nuclear arms race shows no signs of slackening; thermonuclear stockpiles are growing at a frightening speed. As a founding Member of the United Nations India is deeply concerned at this growing trend towards violence in international life.

The gravity of the situation in West Asia has been of the utmost concern to the international community. Vast Arab territories lie under foreign occupation. Hundreds of thousands of persons have been displaced from their homes and hearths. Steps have been taken to annex parts of these occupied lands and to continue the occupation indefinitely of the rest of the area. Tensions continue to grow along the cease-fire positions and there are frequent clashes in spite of the presence of United Nations observers. International commerce through this region has been severely affected.

In the days preceding the outbreak of conflict last June, it was India's earnest and constant endeavour, both inside and outside the United Nations, to help preserve peace in West Asia by urging restraint on all parties. We stood firmly behind the Secretary-General's efforts to gain a breathing spell during which quiet diplomacy could be used to resolve the crisis. After Israel's attack on its Arab neighbours we and several other members of the

Security Council advocated an immediate cease-fire and withdrawal of all armed forces to the positions held prior to the outbreak of hostilities. We did this because of our firm conviction that a cease-fire without a simultaneous call for a withdrawal of alien armed forces was not only contrary to the eminent practice of the United Nations but also against its fundamental principle of non-use of force in international relations and the principle that territorial gains should not be made through military conquest. The deliberations of the fifth emergency special session, even though inconclusive, have shown a near unanimity among member nations on these fundamental principles.

It is a matter of regret, therefore, that no progress has been made in securing the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied territories and in bringing peace and security to the area. India firmly urges that this impasse must be broken. We must all realize that failure to find a solution for the problems of West Asia would lead to even graver threats to peace. It is our belief that the foundation of lasting peace in West Asia should be built on certain basic and fundamental principles of our Charter, in particular those contained in Article 2. First, there must be a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Arab lands under their occupation. Secondly, all States must respect the territorial integrity and political independence of one another in accordance with the Charter of this Organization. Thirdly, all outstanding problems in the region should be settled exclusively through peaceful means. Finally, the just rights of the Arab refugees must be safeguarded. As the Secretary-General has reminded us: "people everywhere, and this certainly applies to the Palestinian refugees, have a natural right to be in their homeland and to have a future" [ibid., para. 49].

It is also imperative to strengthen the presence of the United Nations in the area to ensure a smooth transition from the present state of crisis to a state of calm and peace. The role of the United Nations has been commendable in peace-keeping over the years in West Asia. I should like to pay a tribute to the officers and men of the United Nations Emergency Force who

discharged their duties with such devotion and distinction and many of whom fell in the service of peace.

Another area where innocent people are suffering untold misery is Viet-Nam. Many representatives have expressed their deep concern and stressed the need to find a peaceful solution to this problem. My Government's views on the tragic war in Viet-Nam have been expressed on several occasions. As a neighbour belonging to the same continent and geographical region, India has a vital interest in peace in this area. As member and Chairman of the International Commission for Supervision and Control, we bear certain special responsibilities. We have also wider and more important consideration in mind, that is the interests of world peace which can be threatened by an escalation of the Viet-Nam conflict.

It is against this background that I should like to say a few words on this subject. My delegation welcomes the statement of the President of the United States wherein he said: "I affirm without reservation the willingness of the United States to seek and find a political solution of the conflict in Viet-Nam." India stands by its consistent policy that a solution to the problem of Viet-Nam must and can be found only at the conference table and not on the battlefield. We have always believed that a peaceful solution can be found within the framework of the Geneva Agreements of 1954. In this context we are glad to note that Ambassador Goldberg has stated [1562nd meeting] that those agreements should constitute the basis for a settlement. It is our conviction that the people of Viet-Nam alone can decide their destiny without any foreign interference.

The most immediate problem, however, is to create a proper atmosphere for a peaceful solution. The first essential step for this purpose, in our considered view, is the unconditional ending of the bombing of North Viet-Nam and we are confident that if this is done it will lead to cessation of all hostile activities throughout Viet-Nam and a Geneva-type meeting, to which all necessary parties including the National Front for Liberation should be invited. We are also confident that the Democratic

Republic of Viet- Nam would respond favourably to such a positive step, which would be welcomed throughout the world.

The Government of India will continue, as it has done so far, to make every effort to shift the conflict from the battlefield to the conference table. In this respect we are encouraged by the positive response we have received from the various parties concerned, including the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. We would appeal to all parties concerned not to lay down any pre-conditions. There is always some military risk involved in de-escalating a conflict but the risks involved in escalation are greater. We hope, therefore, that the Government of the United States of America will, in the larger interests of peace, take a calculated risk by stopping the bombing of North Viet-Nam in the belief that it will lead to a cessation of all hostilities throughout Viet-Nam and negotiations for a peaceful settlement. We would also appeal to the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam to look at this question from the larger interest of peace in Asia and the world and we are confident that it will respond favourably if no preconditions are laid to the cessation of bombing of its territory.

We should like to add the voice of India to that of others, including the Secretary- General's, who have expressed their belief and hope that an unconditional cessation of the bombing of North Viet-Nam would be followed by a cessation of all hostilities and lead to negotiations for a peaceful settlement. We do so not as an exercise in wishful thinking but with confidence and belief based on our talks with the various parties concerned in the conflict.

The problems of West Asia and Viet-Nam do not exhaust the catalogue of situations which imperil peace and security because of interference from outside. Both in South West Africa and in Southern Rhodesia two racist minorities, militant and ruthless, to whom neither the fundamental rights of the people who constitute the majorities in those areas, nor international opinion as expressed through numerous resolutions of the various organs of the United Nations, seem to matter, continue to hold

power. I need not go into any details about my country's position either on apartheid or on colonialism: it is well known. I would merely say here that the sufferings of the people of Zimbabwe, the problems of the majority in South Africa, the problems caused by Portuguese colonialism in Angola, Guinea and Mozambique, are all facets of one composite picture. It is a matter of regret that the trade and commerce which certain affluent countries are carrying on with those Territories should help to sustain the oppressors in power. India joins with the Organization of African Unity in stating firmly and unambiguously that the state is being set in that part of the world for a major explosion. It is the duty of the international community to persevere in its efforts to avert the tragedy.

In the current critical international situation, meaningful measures of genuine disarmament calculated to achieve the fundamental objective of general and complete disarmament assume greater urgency than ever before. In this context one of the most serious problems facing the international community today is the need to halt, reduce, and eventually eliminate the glowing nuclear menace. The nuclear-weapon Powers are continuing to augment and develop their offensive and defensive weapon systems.

In the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament and elsewhere, considerable attention has been devoted in the recent past to the question of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. There can be no doubt of the immense threat posed to world security and stability by the indiscriminate proliferation of nuclear weapons. India believes that non-proliferation, like all other disarmament measures, must be examined and resolved in the context of security for all.

It has long been an accepted and axiomatic principle that international security lies not in armament, but in restraints on armament, and in disarmament. The rational approach to the solution of that problem requires that any international instrument which seeks to limit the threat of nuclear weapons must ensure that the possessors of those weapons should be denied the licence to continue increasing the instrument of their

threat. Nuclear disarmament cannot be achieved by the preservation of exclusive rights, privileges and options sought to be retained by certain armed and powerful countries while measures are to be taken to limit the actions of the threatened and unarmed countries.

It is for that reason that India has consistently emphasized that any international instrument which seeks to deal with this problem must ensure, if it is to be acceptable and to endure, that both nuclear and non-nuclear weapon Powers accept obligations not to proliferate. It must be recognized that those mutual obligations are complementary and are but two facets of the same problem.

The General Assembly has already laid down, by its resolution 2028 (XX), the principles which any non-proliferation arrangement should embody if it is to be truly balanced and non-discriminatory and a genuine step towards the goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. It is only on the basis of those principles that a mutually acceptable non-proliferation agreement can be worked out.

Certain non-nuclear countries could have produced nuclear weapons several years ago, had they so desired, but have refrained from doing so. It can scarcely be argued that this policy of restraint and self-discipline should result in their being deprived of the benefits of the development of peaceful nuclear technology. While the Government of India continues to be in favour of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, it is equally strongly in favour of the proliferation of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes as an essential means by which the developing countries can benefit from the vast advantages of science and technology in that field. We are glad to note that our approach to this question enjoys the support of a large number of Governments. It is of the greatest importance that this consideration should be borne in mind in the formulation of a balanced and acceptable international non-proliferation instrument.

Ever since 1954 the Government of India has been making efforts

to achieve a ban on all nuclear weapon testing. We are distressed that it has not yet been possible to conclude a comprehensive test-ban Treaty. The partial test-ban Treaty has remained doubly partial in that it has not been acceded to by all States, and in that it does not cover underground tests. There is a serious danger that even that partial Treaty may cease to have any real meaning in view of the continuation and acceleration of nuclear weapon tests by non-signatory States. There have also been ominous reports that with the development of more sophisticated weapons systems there might even be a resumption of atmospheric testing. The international community cannot but view that prospect with the deepest alarm and make intensive efforts to put an end to all nuclear weapon tests by all countries.

We are now nearing the end of a decade which began with great hopes and expectations for the poverty-stricken areas of the world, in which more than three fourths of humanity resides. With the designation of the current decade as the United Nations Development Decade, we had hoped that a beginning had been made towards an all-out drive to reduce if not bridge, the gap between the rich North and the poor South. The targets set for the Development Decade were by no means ambitious. And yet, nearly seven years after the solemn resolve of the entire international community to bend its energies for the attainment of those modest targets, if we find ourselves farther away from them than we were, we owe an explanation to ourselves and to the collective conscience of mankind. So pressing and urgent are the problems of the developing countries that we can no longer afford to delay concerted international action to solve them.

There is no doubt that the effort for the improvement of living standards and for the attainment of higher rates of economic growth will have to be made by the developing countries themselves. And yet, year after year, this Assembly is reminded that the failure of the developing countries to attain the modest targets of economic growth set for the Development Decade has been mainly due to the insufficiency of external resources, and not due to any lack of effort on their part.

This year once again, concern has been expressed at the loss of momentum in international aid adversely affecting the efforts made to realize the goals of the Development Decade. I join all those who have urged the major industrialised countries to make every attempt to ensure the replenishment of the resources of the International Development Association. I would also urge them to reconsider their attitude to the Capital Development Fund and to make substantial contributions to it; the commencement of its operations next year will mark an important step forward in international co-operation in this field.

Another matter for serious concern is that the terms and conditions of development loans continue to remain hard and inflexible and in some cases have become even harder. It has been estimated that if the present volume and the terms and conditions of aid to developing countries were to be maintained, a paradoxical situation will be reached by 1975 when there will be a net transfer of resources from the developing to the developed countries. In order to overcome these difficulties, the developing countries must be enabled to increase their export earnings on which they must remain largely dependent if they are to stand on their own feet. That is the primary objective enshrined in the Final Act of the first session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Although the permanent machinery of UNCTAD has completed three years of activity, as the Secretary-General's introduction to his annual report [A/6701/Add.1] highlights, the progress towards the fulfilment of the aims and objectives set forth in 1964 has been alarmingly slow.

The successful conclusion of the Kennedy Round negotiations a few months ago was no doubt an important event and will contribute significantly to further growth in world trade. However, it is a matter of serious concern that the main beneficiaries of this growth will be the developed countries, while the major problems of the developing countries in the field of trade have remained unresolved. My delegation would strongly urge the completion of the unfinished tasks of the Kennedy Round before the end of this

year. In addition, new initiatives would be required for the expansion of the trade of the developing countries.

In a few months' time my country will have the honour to play host to the second session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The "New Delhi Round", as U Thant has called it, will provide a unique opportunity not only for assessing the past achievements but also for the adoption of concrete measures for the future to provide practical and meaningful solutions to the urgent problems of the developing nations. In the next few days in Algiers the developing countries will be meeting, to discuss their common problems and the solutions to those problems which they hope will emerge from New Delhi. Ultimately, the success of the "New Delhi Round" will be largely determined by the political will of its members to undertake the necessary measures to provide those solutions¹. We have every hope that the "New Delhi round" will usher in a new era of international cooperation in the field of trade and development of developing countries.

I have just enunciated the views of my Government on the issues of war and peace in West Asia and Viet-Nam; on colonialism and racialism; on international co-operation and multilateral efforts to remove poverty. All this I have said in the context of our basic approach towards peace and progress and our policy of coexistence and non-alignment. We believe that by remaining non-aligned we promote the cause of peaceful coexistence. It is further our belief that this approach and this policy express our profound faith in and loyalty to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. Each one of the Members of this world Organization faces problems at home and in its own region. India is no exception to this. Our problems are gigantic, but these are matched by the determination of the Indian people to solve them through its own efforts within the framework of a democratic set-up. We have this year had our Fourth General Elections, and our people have once again demonstrated their faith in the strength and vitality of democratic processes. Rapid strides have been made in industrialisation and social services, taking us closer

to our goal of a democratic socialist society. In spite of the burden we bear of meeting the challenge of an arrogant and unpredictable neighbour to our north-who unfortunately is not represented in this Organization and thus not subject to its discipline-we shall continue to strive to realize our cherished objective, namely, a more prosperous and fuller life for all our people.

The international scene presents a sombre picture. There is surely at present an urgent need to rectify this state of affairs and direct the energy and resources of the international community towards the path of peace and reconciliation. Our Organization can and must give a lead in this direction through strict adherence to the cardinal principles of inadmissibility of the use of force by one nation against another; of respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of States; of the right of all nations to live in freedom and enjoy the fruits of freedom; of the need to remove the canker of colonialism and radicalism from the world; of settlement of international disputes exclusively through peaceful means; of international co-operation in political, economic and other fields for the benefits of mankind.