

**SECRETARY-GENERAL REFLECTS ON 'INTERVENTION' IN THIRTY-FIFTH
ANNUAL DITCHLEY FOUNDATION LECTURE**

Press Release

SG/SM/6613

**SECRETARY-GENERAL REFLECTS ON 'INTERVENTION' IN THIRTY-FIFTH
ANNUAL DITCHLEY FOUNDATION LECTURE**

Following is the text of the thirty-fifth annual Ditchley Foundation Lecture given today by Secretary-General Kofi Annan at Ditchley Park, United Kingdom on 26 June 1998:

It is a great honour for me to be asked to give the thirty-fifth annual Ditchley Foundation Lecture. I have carefully perused the list of your previous lecturers, and I may say I was somewhat intimidated to find myself following such a long line of presidents, prime ministers, cardinals ... and even central bankers. But I took heart when I saw that last year's speaker was my friend Bill Richardson. It is indeed reassuring that, after hearing from such an important and distinguished member of the United Nations Security Council, who is going on to become even more important and distinguished, you still think a mere Secretary-General might have something of interest to add.

Even so, I expect some of you are surprised by the title I have chosen for my talk. Or if not, you may think I have come to preach a sermon against intervention. I suppose that would be the traditional line for a citizen of a former British colony to take, in an address to senior policy makers and diplomats of the former imperial Power. And some people would also expect a sermon on those lines from the United Nations Secretary-General, whatever his country of origin.

The United Nations is, after all, an association of sovereign States, and sovereign States do tend to be extremely jealous of their sovereignty. Small States, especially, are fearful of intervention in their affairs by great Powers. And indeed, our century has seen many examples of the strong "intervening" -- or interfering -- in the affairs of the weak, from the Allied intervention in the Russian civil war in 1918 to the Soviet "interventions" in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan.

Others might refer to the American intervention in Viet Nam, or even the Turkish intervention in Cyprus in 1974. The motives, and the legal justification, may be better in some cases than others, but the word "intervention" has come to be used almost as a synonym for "invasion".

The Charter of the United Nations gives great responsibilities to great Powers, in their capacity as permanent members of the Security Council. But as a safeguard against abuse of those powers, Article 2.7 of the Charter protects national sovereignty even from intervention by the United Nations itself. I'm sure everyone in this audience knows it by heart. But let me remind you --just in case -- that that Article forbids the United Nations to intervene "in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State".

That prohibition is just as relevant today as it was in 1945: violations of sovereignty remain violations of the global order. Yet in other contexts the word "intervention" has a more benign meaning. We all applaud the policeman who intervenes to stop a fight, or the teacher who prevents big boys from bullying a smaller one. And medicine uses the word "intervention" to describe the act of the surgeon, who saves life by "intervening" to remove malignant growth, or to repair damaged organs. Of course, the most intrusive methods of treatment are not always to be recommended. A wise doctor knows when to let nature take its course. But a doctor who never intervened would have few admirers, and probably even fewer patients.

So it is in international affairs. Why was the United Nations established, if not to act as a benign policeman or doctor? Our job is to intervene: to prevent conflict where we can, to put a stop to it when it has broken out, or -- when neither of those things is possible -- at least to contain it and prevent it from spreading. That is what the world expects of us, even though -- alas -- the United Nations by no means always lives up to such expectations. It is also what the Charter requires of us, particularly in Chapter VI, which deals with the peaceful settlement of disputes, and Chapter VII, which describes the action the United Nations must take when peace comes under threat, or is actually broken.

The purpose of Article 2.7, which I quoted just now, was to confine such interventions to cases where the international peace is threatened or broken, and to keep the United Nations from interfering in purely domestic disputes. Yet even that article carries the important rider that "this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII". In other words, even national sovereignty can be set aside if it stands in the way of the Security Council's overriding duty to preserve international peace and security. On the face of it, there is a simple distinction between international conflict, which is clearly the United Nations business, and domestic disputes, which are not. The very phrase "domestic dispute" sounds reassuring. It suggests a little local difficulty which the State in question can easily settle, if only it is left alone to do so.

We all know that in recent years it has not been like that. Most wars nowadays are civil wars. Or at least that is how they start. And these civil

wars are anything but benign. In fact they are "civil" only in the sense that civilians -- that is, non-combatants -- have become the main victims. In the First World War, roughly 90 per cent of those killed were soldiers, and only 10 per cent civilians.

In the Second World War, even if we count all the victims of Nazi death camps as war casualties, civilians made up only half, or just over half, of all those killed. But in many of today's conflicts,

civilians have become the main targets of violence. It is now conventional to put the proportion of civilian casualties somewhere in the region of 75 per cent. I say "conventional" because the truth is that no one really knows. Relief agencies such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Red Cross rightly devote their resources to helping the living rather than counting the dead.

Armies count their own losses, and sometimes make boasts about the number of enemy they have killed. But there is no agency whose job is to keep a tally of civilians killed. The victims of today's brutal conflicts are not merely anonymous, but literally countless. Yet so long as the conflict rages within the borders of a single State, the old orthodoxy would require us to let it rage. We should leave it to "burn itself out", or perhaps to "fester". (You can choose your own euphemism.) We should leave it even to escalate, regardless of human consequences, at least until the point when its effects begin to spill over into neighbouring States, so that it becomes, in the words of so many Security Council resolutions, "a threat to international peace and security".

In reality, this "old orthodoxy" was never absolute. The Charter, after all, was issued in the name of "the peoples", not the governments, of the United Nations. Its aim is not only to preserve international peace -- vitally important though that is -- but also "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person". The Charter protects the sovereignty of peoples. It was never meant as a licence for governments to trample on human rights and human dignity. Sovereignty implies responsibility, not just power.

This year we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That declaration was not meant as a purely rhetorical statement. The General Assembly which adopted it also decided, in the same month, that it had the right to express its concern about the apartheid system in South Africa. The principle of international concern for human rights took precedence over the claim of non-interference in internal affairs.

And the day before it adopted the Universal Declaration, the General Assembly had adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the

Crime of Genocide, which puts all States under an obligation to "prevent and punish" this most heinous of crimes. It also allows them to "call upon the competent organs of the United Nations" to take action for this purpose.

Since genocide is almost always committed with the connivance, if not the direct participation, of the State authorities, it is hard to see how the United Nations could prevent it without intervening in a State's internal affairs.

As for punishment, a very important attempt is now being made to fulfil this obligation through the Ad hoc International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. And 10 days ago in Rome, I had the honour to open the Conference which is to establish a permanent international criminal court. Within a year or two, I sincerely hope, this court will be up and running, with competence to try cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity wherever, and by whomsoever, they are committed.

State frontiers, ladies and gentlemen, should no longer be seen as a watertight protection for war criminals or mass murderers. The fact that a conflict is "internal" does not give the parties any right to disregard the most basic rules of human conduct. Besides, most "internal" conflicts do not stay internal for very long. They soon "spill over" into neighbouring countries.

The most obvious and tragic way this happens is through the flow of refugees. But there are others, one of which is the spread of knowledge. News today travels around the world more rapidly than we could imagine even a few years ago. Human suffering on a large scale has become impossible to keep quiet. People in far-off countries not only hear about it, but often see it on their TV screens.

That in turn leads to public outrage, and pressure on governments to "do something", in other words, to intervene. Moreover, today's conflicts do not only spread across existing frontiers. Sometimes they actually give birth to new States, which of course means new frontiers. In such cases, what started as an internal conflict becomes an international one. That happens when peoples who formerly lived together in one State find each other's behaviour so threatening, or so offensive, that they can no longer do so.

Such separations are seldom as smooth and trouble-free as the famous "velvet divorce" between Czechs and Slovaks. All too often they happen in the midst of, or at the end of, a long and bitter conflict, as was the case with Pakistan and Bangladesh, with the former Yugoslav republics, and with Ethiopia and Eritrea. In other cases, such as the former Soviet Union, the initial separation may be largely non-violent, and yet it soon gives rise to new conflicts, which pose new problems to the international community. In many

cases, the conflict eventually becomes so dangerous that the international community finds itself obliged to intervene. By then it can only do so in the most intrusive and expensive way, which is military intervention.

And yet the most effective interventions are not military. It is much better, from every point of view, if action can be taken to resolve or manage a conflict before it reaches the military stage. Sometimes this action may take the form of economic advice and assistance.

In so many cases ethnic tensions are exacerbated by poverty and famine, or by uneven economic development which brings wealth to one section of a community while destroying the homes and livelihood of another. If outsiders can help avert this by suitably targeted aid and investment, by giving information and training to local entrepreneurs, or by suggesting more appropriate State policies, their "intervention" should surely be welcomed by all concerned.

That is why I see the work of the United Nations Development Programme, and of our sister "Bretton Woods" institutions in Washington, as organically linked to the United Nations work on peace and security. In other cases, what is most needed is skilful and timely diplomacy.

Here in Europe I would cite the example of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)'s High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoep. You hardly

ever see him on television or read about him in the newspapers, but that surely is a measure of his success. His job is to help European States deal with their minority problems quietly and peacefully, so that they never get to the stage of featuring in banner headlines or TV news bulletins around the world.

The United Nations also does its best to "intervene" in such effective but non-military ways. When I went to Baghdad in February of this year, I did so in search of a peaceful solution to a crisis that had brought us to the brink of a new war in the Gulf. I came back with an agreement which averted that crisis, at least for the time being.

The agreement was neither a victory nor a defeat for any one person, nation or group of nations. Certainly the United Nations and the world community lost nothing, gave away nothing and conceded nothing of substance. But by halting the renewal of military hostilities, it was a victory for peace, for reason, for the resolution of conflict by diplomacy.

It underscored, however, that if diplomacy is to succeed, it must be backed both by force and by fairness. The agreement was also a reminder to the entire world of why this Organization was established in the first place: to prevent the outbreak of unnecessary conflict; to seek to find international

solutions to international problems; to obtain respect for international law and agreements from a recalcitrant party without destroying forever that party's dignity and willingness to cooperate.

Iraq is but one example of how, when the moment is ripe, diplomacy through the United Nations can achieve the will of the international community. We much prefer to see disputes settled under Chapter VI, rather than move to the drastic and expensive means available under Chapter VII.

For many years, the United Nations has been conducting successful peacekeeping operations -- both of the traditional variety, monitoring ceasefires and buffer zones, as well as the more complex multidimensional operations that helped bring peace to Namibia, Mozambique and El Salvador.

And in recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on the United Nations political work, as the size -- though not the number -- of peacekeeping operations has shrunk since its peak in the early 1990s. Early diplomatic intervention, at its best, can avert bloodshed altogether. But as you know, our resources are limited. And we are strong believers in the principle of "subsidiarity", which you Europeans are so fond of. In other words, we are more than happy if disputes can be dealt with peacefully at the regional level, without the United Nations needing to be involved.

We must assume, however, that there will always be some tragic cases where peaceful means have failed: where extreme violence is being used, and only forceful intervention can stop it. Even during the cold war, when the United Nations own enforcement capacity was largely paralysed by divisions in the Security Council, there were cases where extreme violations of

human rights in one country led to military intervention by one of its neighbours. In 1971 Indian intervention ended the civil war in East Pakistan, allowing Bangladesh to achieve independence. In 1978 Viet Nam intervened in Cambodia, putting an end to the genocidal rule of the Khmer Rouge. In 1979 Tanzania intervened to overthrow Idi Amin's erratic dictatorship in Uganda.

In all three of those cases the intervening States gave refugee flows across the border as the reason why they had to act. But what justified their action in the eyes of the world was the internal character of the regimes they acted against. And history has by and large ratified that verdict. Few would now deny that in those cases intervention was a lesser evil than allowing massacre and extreme oppression to continue. Yet at the time, in all three cases, the international community was divided and disturbed. Why? Because these interventions were unilateral. The States in question had no mandate from anyone else to act as they did. And that sets an uncomfortable precedent.

Can we really afford to let each State be the judge of its own right, or duty, to intervene in another State's internal conflict? If we do, will we not be forced to legitimize Hitler's championship of the Sudeten Germans, or Soviet intervention in Afghanistan?

Most of us would prefer, I think -- especially now that the cold war is over -- to see such decisions taken collectively, by an international institution whose authority is generally respected. And surely the only institution competent to assume that role is the Security Council of the United Nations. The Charter clearly assigns responsibility to the Council for maintaining international peace and security. I would argue, therefore, that only the Council has the authority to decide that the internal situation in any State is so grave as to justify forceful intervention.

As you know, many Member States feel that the Council's authority now needs to be strengthened by an increase in its membership, bringing in new permanent members or possibly adding a new category of member. Unfortunately a consensus on the details of such a reform has yet to be reached.

This is a matter for the Member States. As Secretary-General I would make only three points. First, the Security Council must become more representative in order to reflect current realities, rather than the realities of 1945. Secondly, the Council's authority depends not only on the representative character of its membership but also on the quality and speed of its decisions. Humanity is ill served when the Council is unable to react quickly and decisively in a crisis. Thirdly, the delay in reaching agreement on reform, however regrettable, must not be allowed to detract from the Council's authority and responsibility in the meanwhile.

The Council in its present form derives its authority from the Charter. That gives it a unique legitimacy as the linchpin of world order, which all Member States should value and respect. It also places a unique responsibility on Council members, both permanent and non-permanent -- a responsibility of which their governments and indeed their citizens should be fully conscious.

Of course the fact that the Council has this unique responsibility does not mean that the intervention itself should always be undertaken directly by the United Nations, in the sense of

forces wearing blue helmets and controlled by the United Nations Secretariat. No one knows better than I do, as a former Under-Secretary-General in charge of peacekeeping, that the United Nations lacks the capacity for directing large-scale military enforcement operations.

At least for the foreseeable future, such operations will have to be undertaken by Member States, or by regional organizations. But they need to have the authority of the Security Council behind them, expressed in an authorizing resolution. That formula, developed in 1990 to deal with the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait, has proved its usefulness and will no doubt be used again in future crises. But we should not assume that intervention always needs to be on a massive scale.

There are cases where the speed of the action may be far more crucial than the size of the force. Personally, I am haunted by the experience of Rwanda in 1994: a terrible demonstration of what can happen when there is no intervention, or at least none in the crucial early weeks of a crisis. General Dallaire, the commander of the United Nations mission, has indicated that with a force of even modest size and means he could have prevented much of the killing. Indeed he has said that 5,000 peacekeepers could have saved 500,000 lives. How tragic it is that at the crucial moment the opposite course was chosen, and the size of the force reduced.

Surely things would have been different if the Security Council had had at its disposal a small rapid reaction force, ready to move at a few days' notice. I believe that if we are to avert further such disasters in the future we need such a capacity; that Member States must have appropriately trained stand-by forces immediately available, and must be willing to send them quickly when the Security Council requests it.

Some have even suggested that private security firms, like the one which recently helped restore the elected President to power in Sierra Leone, might play a role in providing the United Nations with the rapid reaction capacity it needs. When we had need of skilled soldiers to separate fighters from refugees in the Rwandan refugee camps in Goma, I even considered the possibility of engaging a private firm. But the world may not be ready to privatize peace.

In any case, let me stress that I am not asking for a standing army at the beck and call of the Secretary-General. The decision to intervene, I repeat, can only be taken by the Security Council. But at present the Council's authority is diminished, because it lacks the means to intervene effectively even when it wishes to do so.

Let me conclude by coming back to where I started. The United Nations is an association of sovereign States, but the rights it exists to uphold belong to peoples, not governments. By the same token, it is wrong to think the obligations of United Nations membership fall only on States. Each one of us -- whether as workers in government, in intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations, in business, in the media, or simply as human beings -- has an obligation to do whatever he or she can to correct injustice. Each of us has a duty to halt -- or, better, to prevent -- the infliction of suffering.

Much has been written about the "duty to interfere" (*le devoir d'ingérence*). We should remember that the inventor of this phrase, Bernard Kouchner, coined it not as a minister in the French

Government but when he was still running the charity Médecins du Monde. He argued that non-governmental organizations had a duty to cross national boundaries, with or without the consent of governments, in order to reach the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies. And their right to do this has since been recognized by two resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly -- in 1988 (after the earthquake in Armenia) and again in 1991.

Both these resolutions, while paying full respect to State sovereignty, assert the overriding right of people in desperate situations to receive help, and the right of international bodies to provide it.

So when we recall tragic events such as those of Bosnia or Rwanda and ask "why did no one intervene?", the question should not be addressed only to the United Nations, or even to its Member States. Each of us as an individual has to take his or her share of responsibility. No one can claim ignorance of what happened. All of us should recall how we responded, and ask: What did I do? Could I have done more? Did I let my prejudice, my indifference, or my fear overwhelm my reasoning? Above all, how would I react next time?

And "next time" may already be here. The last few months' events in Kosovo present the international community with what may be its severest challenge in Europe since the Dayton agreement was concluded in 1995.

As in Bosnia, we have witnessed the shelling of towns and villages, indiscriminate attacks on civilians in the name of security, the separation of men from women and children and their summary execution, and the flight of thousands from their homes, many of them across an international border. In short, events reminiscent of the whole ghastly scenario of "ethnic cleansing" again -- as yet on a smaller scale than in Bosnia, but for how long?

Of course there are differences -- the crucial one being, precisely, that so far this conflict is being waged within the borders of a single State, recognized as such by the entire international community. I repeat: "so far". But when we witness the outflow of refugees into Albania; when we hear the insistence of Kosovar Albanian spokesmen that they will settle for nothing less than full independence; and when we remember the ethnic tensions in at least one neighbouring State, how can we not conclude that this crisis is indeed a threat to international peace and security?

This time, ladies and gentlemen, no one will be able to say that they were taken by surprise -- neither by the means employed, nor by the ends pursued. This time, ethnically driven violence must be seen for what it is, and we know all too well what to expect if it is allowed to continue.

Recently, I recommended that the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force mandate be extended so as to sustain its success on the border of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and maintain stability. I have also been gratified by the clear determination expressed by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and its member governments to prevent a further escalation of the fighting, and I encourage all steps that may deter the further use of ethnically driven repression and the resort to violence by either side in Kosovo.

Of course, we all hope for a peaceful solution. And I particularly welcome the efforts of President Yeltsin to achieve this. But that only makes it more important to stop the violence now. And I feel confident that this time, if peaceful means fail to achieve this, the Security Council will not be slow to assume its grave responsibility.

A great deal is at stake in Kosovo today -- for the people of Kosovo themselves; for the overall stability of the Balkans; and for the credibility and legitimacy of all our words and deeds in pursuit of collective security. All our professions of regret; all our expressions of determination to never again permit another Bosnia; all our hopes for a peaceful future for the Balkans will be cruelly mocked if we allow Kosovo to become another killing field.

Our theme is vast but the hour is late. Let me recall, in conclusion, that in French law there is a crime called "failure to assist a person in danger" (non-assistance a personne en danger).

I am sure this is what the late Francois Mitterrand had in mind in April 1991, when he congratulated the Security Council on its decision to intervene in the internal affairs of Iraq, in order to save the Kurds. "For the first time", President Mitterrand declared, "non-interference has stopped at the point where it was becoming failure to assist a people in danger". That, ladies and gentlemen, is what "intervention" is all about.

When people are in danger, everyone has a duty to speak out. No one has a right to pass by on the other side. If we are tempted to do so, we should call to mind the unforgettable warning of Martin Niemoller, the German Protestant theologian who lived through the Nazi persecution:

"In Germany they came first for the Communists. And I did not speak up because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Jews. And I did not speak up, because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists. And I did not speak up, because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics. And I did not speak up, because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me. And by that time there was no one left to speak up."

* * * * *