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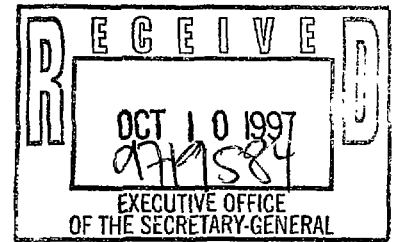
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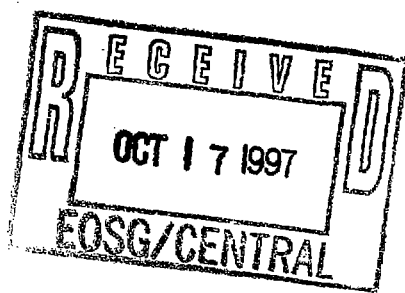


ANALYSIS OF THE GENERAL DEBATE

Please find attached, as requested, an analysis of the recently concluded General Debate of the 52nd Session of the General Assembly. The analysis, which was prepared by Mr. Kanninen, does not dwell on the reception of the reform package, as we understand that Mr. Strong's office was monitoring this issue separately.

K Prendergast

Kieran Prendergast
10 October 1997



SA FYI R13/10
~~*[Signature]*~~ 16/10

- cc: All Under-Secretaries-General at Headquarters
 All heads of Agencies and Offices away from Headquarters
 Mr. de Soto
 Mr. Fall
 DPA Directors
 Mr. Kanninen

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ANALYSIS OF THE TRENDS AND MAIN ISSUES IN THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 52ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Introduction

This year's general debate was much more focused than the debate last year. The issue of UN reform dominated the discussions and was commented on by practically all speakers. Although speakers very much welcomed the comprehensive reform package of the Secretary-General (most supported its endorsement in principle), a number of them also expressed a desire to discuss specific recommendations contained in the package in more detail.

Reform of the Security Council was another main topic on the agenda. The new urgency Member States felt about Council expansion reflected both the progress made by the Open-ended Working Group on Council reform during the 51st session of the General Assembly and the recent initiatives of Ambassador Razali, President of the 51st Assembly, and US Ambassador Richardson. During the summer both promoted the ambitious idea that the General Assembly should reach a framework decision on Council expansion before the end of 1997. Their initiatives received a mixed response.

There was an increase in high-level attendance of the debate: 18 Heads of State addressed the Assembly, six more than in 1996. The number of countries participating declined slightly from 181 to 176.

In addition to reform of the United Nations, major themes of the debate were: the dangers of globalization; progress in disarmament; the need to focus on sustainable development; the burden of external debt and trends in international trade; as well as questions of drugs and terrorism; regional integration and cooperation; the prevention of conflicts; human rights; good governance and democratization; and the financial crisis of the Organization. Many speakers stressed the need to strengthen the role of the General Assembly in UN decision-making and amend or abolish the veto rights of the permanent members of the Security Council. Regional conflicts and issues as well as pressing national events and problems were addressed to a predictable extent. There was no discussion this year about peace-enforcement or coercive methods in general, except for some references to UN sanctions. Peace-keeping and humanitarian affairs, as well as environmental issues and the implementation of the UN agenda and action plans of World Conferences, were addressed less than in previous years.

Overall trends in the debate

Although the debate was more focused than last year it had a pessimistic //

undertone. As this was the first year of the tenure of the Secretary-General, Member States wanted to give him full and unconditional support. But the optimism regarding the potential role of the UN in the post-Cold War era felt during the corresponding debate of the first year of Mr. Boutros-Ghali's leadership in 1992 - and still mostly prevalent during the debates at the 50th Anniversary session two years ago - was clearly absent. While the membership pondered the role of the UN at the dawn of the 21st century, in response to the Secretary General's request to do so, the deepening crisis of the Organization brought new seriousness to its deliberations.

The financial problems had lasted too long, the membership felt, and no immediate or fair solution was in sight. Some recent unilateral measures taken by important Member States, as well as failures by the international community to implement key multilateral agreements, were highlighted and lamented; in this context the US decisions on UN financing and the problems in any effective implementation of Agenda 21 were most often mentioned. Some Member States also felt that any effort to try to solve the question of the expansion of the Security Council "in haste" would cause deep friction among the membership, particularly if the composition of the Council was tied to an agreement on a new scale of assessment to be reached by the end of 1997.

There were also clear positive currents within the debate. Most speakers were impressed by the efforts of the Secretary-General to demonstrate strategic leadership and provide a comprehensive reform package for the United Nations. They embraced the vision this package outlined although not necessarily all the details it included. Additional positive signs could be seen in energetic efforts to enhance regional cooperation and integration in many parts of the world. Economic growth has been strong in some parts of the developing world, while democratic reforms and principles of good governance have advanced in many countries.

Prevention, peacemaking, peace-keeping

The debate also indicated the issues the membership would like to highlight in the years ahead. In the political arena the discussions reflected a shift in emphasis from peacemaking to prevention. There was no talk about peace-enforcement and much less discussion about the UN involvement in settling and managing regional conflicts than in the debates during the last five years. The focus was on regional initiatives and cooperation.

Even when peace-keeping was directly addressed, the focus was on the preventive presence of troops or their rapid deployment to avoid escalation of hostilities. Post-conflict peace-building was stressed as a way of preventing the re-emergence of future

crises. The importance of early warning and early action was mentioned by many speakers. The question of sovereignty was not raised in the debate as there was no lengthy discussions about humanitarian or other intervention.

Development

In the economic and social area, globalization is bringing both opportunities and dangers to the UN membership, it was agreed. The disadvantages and hazards of globalization for developing countries were stressed by a number of speakers. New technologies connected the world in an unprecedented way but could also create instability, prove threatening to democratic institutions and undermine economic and social well being. Protectionism and trade agreements could hurt small and vulnerable countries unless additional attention was paid by the international community. This was suggested by some as an urgent task for the United Nations. The sentiment expressed by Indonesia was shared by many developing countries: "In this era of trade liberation and in spite of the presence of WTO the developing countries are finding their comparative advantage rendered meaningless by an array of non-tariff barriers, preference erosion and misuse of anti-dumping measures and countervailing duties".

Small island and African countries felt particularly vulnerable to and marginalized by recent rulings emanating from international trade agreements. Meanwhile some Asian countries - such as China, Malaysia and Thailand - referred to the instability that globalization is bringing to financial markets. The preventive and policy-setting role of the UN was stressed. Initiatives of the Bretton Woods institutions on external debt were praised but many stated that there were still not enough efforts made to relieve the debt burden of developing countries. Drug trafficking and terrorism were also often mentioned in the context of globalization or as a national problem.

Disarmament

Many delegations saw important progress in the field of disarmament. Recent events and developments on anti-personnel mine negotiations, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty were mentioned by a the great majority of countries. Many developing countries wanted to stress that nuclear disarmament questions should be kept on the agenda of the international community. In this context, nuclear free zones - existing or intended - were mentioned by many speakers. Microdisarmanent was described as an important new concept deserving serious attention.

Human rights, governance and democratization

Human rights remained very high on the agenda. The protection of women, children and minorities was mentioned as well as the importance of establishing the International Criminal Court. The 50th Anniversary of the 1948 Human Rights Declaration next year, as well as the appointment of Mrs. Mary Robinson as High Commissioner for Human Rights, were mentioned by most speakers. Although the observance of human rights was universally accepted as a key goal for the membership some States also discussed double standards and unwillingness by some countries to take into account cultural differences in their approach to human rights.

Democratization and good governance were described by an increasing number of speakers as important trends and principles to be promoted. It was observed that corruption undermines economic growth in many countries. The need to strengthen UN assistance in this field was stressed as a way of improving the prospects for sustainable development as well as international peace. Latin American and Eastern European countries in particular stressed the steady progress in the area of democratization and governance in their countries. Setbacks in democratic transition - such as the coup d'etat in Sierra Leone - were also often mentioned.

Democratization as a desirable goal was also used in another and quite different context: the need to democratize the United Nations and particularly its decision-making processes. For a number of countries - perhaps an increasing number - the democratization of decision-making in the Security Council was an essential goal. The veto right of the permanent members of the Security Council was mentioned as an undemocratic privilege which should be amended or eliminated. A number of speakers also stressed the democratic role of the General Assembly and expressed a wish to increase its role in UN decision-making.

Security Council reform

The statements commenting on Security Council reform repeated the positions established during the discussions of the past three years but also added new elements. The fact that so many Member States spoke about the matter - close to 160 countries - was a clear indication of the membership's concern. While many speakers wanted to promote a quick decision on the question, many others stressed the dangers in moving forward prematurely. Some countries that have never expressed any opinion in the past - such as Myanmar - stated their position for first time (Myanmar was inclined to support an increase in both categories of membership). Some had slightly modified their positions and some suggested totally new positions (such as Indonesia's proposal to

create two permanent seats for the Asian countries).

The link between expansion of the Council and the financial crisis was an explosive issue. Japan stated - with reference to Council reform - that it "strongly hopes that the financial reform of the United Nations will proceed together with reforms in other areas as a whole in a balanced manner, and that agreement on an equitable scale of assessment can be achieved". Italy, on the other hand, bluntly stated: "There can be absolutely no link between members' contributions and Security Council reform, lest the impression be created that permanent seats are up for sale".