



**General Assembly**

PROVISIONAL

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ENGLISH

Forty-fourth session

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FIRST MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Tuesday, 19 September 1989, at 3.00 p.m.

President: Mr. VASQUEZ (Argentina)  
(Temporary President)

later: Mr. GARBA (Nigeria)  
(President)

- Opening of the forty-fourth session by the Temporary President, Chairman of the delegation of Argentina
- Minute of silent prayer or meditation
- Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/44/535)
- Credentials of representatives to the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly
- Election of the President of the General Assembly
- Address by Mr. Joseph Garba, President of the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

ITEM 1 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

OPENING OF THE FORTY-FOURTH SESSION BY THE TEMPORARY PRESIDENT, CHAIRMAN OF THE DELEGATION OF ARGENTINA

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): I declare open the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

ITEM 2 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

MINUTE OF SILENT PRAYER OR MEDITATION

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): Before I call on representatives to observe a minute of silent prayer or meditation in accordance with rule 62 of the rules of procedure, I propose that as we do so we also observe the International Day of Peace on this third Tuesday of September, as proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/67 of 30 November 1981, to be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples.

The International Day of Peace provides a unique opportunity to take stock - a time to reflect upon the successes of the past as well as upon the disappointments, and to focus clearly upon the challenges that lie ahead. As we open the forty-fourth session, the ideal of peace has slowly been assuming concrete form and definition for many people around the world. It is therefore incumbent upon us on this special day to dedicate ourselves to ensuring that the promise of peace will become reality and to working together in a common quest to bring greater peace and security to all.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

## ITEM 131 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
(A/44/535)

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): Before turning to the next item on our agenda I should like, in keeping with the established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/44/535, which contains a letter addressed to me by the Secretary-General in which he informs the Assembly that four Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I should like to remind delegations that under Article 19 of the Charter

"A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of that information?

It was so decided.

## ITEM 3 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

## CREDENTIALS OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FORTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## (a) APPOINTMENT OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly, at the beginning of each session, shall appoint, on the proposal of the President, a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

Accordingly, it is proposed that for the forty-fourth session the Credentials Committee should consist of the following Member States: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Colombia, China, Malawi, the Philippines, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United States of America and Zaire.

(The Temporary President)

May I take it that the States I have mentioned are hereby appointed members of the Credentials Committee?

It was so decided.

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): Members of the Assembly will recall that by its decision 43/462 of 11 July 1989 the General Assembly decided that a special session on apartheid and its destructive consequences in southern Africa would be held from 12 to 14 December 1989. As that special session will be held within the period envisaged for the forty-fourth regular session, and in order to permit the special session of the Assembly to use the limited time available to it for the consideration of the substantive question before it, I would propose that the Credentials Committee be authorized to examine and report on the credentials submitted for representatives not only to the present forty-fourth regular session but also, to the extent possible, on those submitted for representatives to the special session on apartheid and its destructive consequences in southern Africa.

May I take it that the Assembly agrees to authorize the Credentials Committee to proceed accordingly?

It was so decided.

#### ITEM 4 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

#### ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): I now invite members of the General Assembly to proceed to the election of the President of the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session.

May I recall that in accordance with paragraph 1 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 33/138 the President of the General Assembly at the forty-fourth session should be elected from an African State.

(The Temporary President)

In that connection, I have been informed by the Chairman of the Group of African States that his Group has endorsed the candidacy of His Excellency Major-General Joseph Nanven Garba of Nigeria for the presidency of the General Assembly.

Taking into account the provisions of paragraph 16 of annex VI to the rules of procedure, I therefore declare His Excellency Major-General Joseph Nanven Garba of Nigeria elected President of the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session by acclamation.

I extend my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Major-General Joseph Nanven Garba and invite him to assume the presidency.

I request the Chief of Protocol to escort the President to the podium.

Mr. Garba took the Chair.

ADDRESS BY MR. JOSEPH GARBA, PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-FOURTH SESSION

The PRESIDENT: My unanimous election to this prestigious office must be seen as the tangible expression of the confidence of this membership in my abilities and my resolute determination to fully discharge my duties as President of the General Assembly. This is a grave responsibility which can only be accepted with some humility and much courage. My election also represents the singular will of the African member States which, despite differences and difficult choices, found a basis for consensus. Their decision is deserving of my special appreciation and my commitment to being a worthy son of Africa.

My election is also a tribute, on behalf of all States Members of the United Nations, to my country, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for its consistent and enduring commitment to the principles of multilateralism, its support for the purposes and principles enshrined in our Charter, and its abiding quest for, and contribution to, international peace and security.

Acceptance of this great honour requires that I make undertakings on behalf of each of you; undertakings that your co-operation and assistance will be forthcoming, that your enthusiasm and support will be untiring and that your insights and experience, which have always been available to me in the past, will continue to guide me, to ensure that this session contributes in a concrete and meaningful manner to the resolution of the complex problems besetting our world. I am confident that this session will benefit particularly from the contributions of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly, the Chairmen of the Main Committees, our distinguished Secretary-General and the Secretariat team.

Certainly, the forty-third session benefited enormously from the skilful statesmanship of my distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Dante Caputo,

(The President)

former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Argentina. To him I offer, with your permission, our profound admiration and appreciation. We must also warmly welcome Ambassador Ronald Spiers, our new Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs. I have no doubt that he, like his predecessor, Ambassador Joseph Reed, will serve this Assembly with remarkable skill and effectiveness.

As we mark this opening of the forty-fourth session, we are cognizant of the remarkable changes taking place in our world, changes resulting from the gradual improvement in super-Power relations. And whereas the scope and magnitude of these altered circumstances have yet to fully materialize, we are none the less witness to significant shifts in perceptions, positions and policies and their concomitant positive effects on the organization of international relations. Where hitherto there existed a climate of fear and mutual suspicion, there is now emerging an atmosphere of trust; where hitherto there existed unilateral action in pursuit of narrow national interests, there now seem to be real possibilities for a concerted approach in the interest of regional and global peace. There is no room here for complacency. In order for one of the cardinal purposes of our Charter - the maintenance of international peace and security - to be attained, for mankind to be saved from the scourge of war, it is imperative that improvements in the international situation be further developed and sustained.

Such growing determination on the part of the super-Powers to devise joint solutions to problems hitherto insoluble must be extended to all aspects of our collective concerns and endeavours. If old perceptions and entrenched positions are to give way to the emerging reality, if the lofty ideals enshrined in our Charter are to be realized, then it is of the utmost urgency that peace be given a chance. In the immortal words of Martin Luther King:

(The President)

"It is not enough to say 'We must not wage war'. It is necessary to love peace and sacrifice for it. We must concentrate not merely on the eradication of war, but on the affirmation of peace... we must see that peace represents a sweeter music, a cosmic melody that is far superior to the discords of war."

The promotion of global peace and security, a goal to which we collectively and individually profess our commitment, is endangered by - is indeed incompatible with - the relentless acquisition and stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction. For this reason, the recent progress made towards arms limitation and disarmament by the super-Powers and the alliance systems they lead, is indeed most welcome.

The conclusion and steady implementation of the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - the INF Treaty - by the Soviet Union and the United States has provided the impetus for further negotiations involving both nuclear and conventional weapons. The INF Treaty is of historic significance as it has, for the first time in the history of arms negotiations, led to the actual elimination of a whole class of nuclear weapons. This is but the tip of the iceberg, however.

(The President)

We must urge the two super-Powers to make further and faster progress in reducing and progressively eliminating the lethal weapons of mass destruction still stockpiled in their bulging arsenals. A first positive step would be to redeem their declared intent to reduce, by 50 per cent, the strategic nuclear weapons currently in their possession. They must also rapidly institute and adopt such confidence-building measures as a moratorium on nuclear tests of any kind. Agreements must be concluded and implemented to make our world safe from the threat of nuclear conflagration. Nuclear-weapon States must also forgo the option of first-use of those weapons.

It is gratifying to note the proposals introduced recently concerning the reduction of conventional arms, especially in Europe. The threat posed by chemical weapons is also frighteningly real and mandates a unified call for their total elimination. What is imperative is that the large amount of resources currently being devoted to the acquisition of these arms in other parts of the world be heavily reduced and redirected. At the very least, a partial aim of complete and general disarmament must be the reallocation of resources released from reduced arms budgets to the improvement of the lot of the mass of peoples, particularly in the developing countries. The role of the United Nations in the pursuit and realization of the essential objective of disarmament must neither be underestimated nor ceded. In this regard, I wish to comment the useful insights provided by our Secretary-General on this subject in his report on the work of the Organization for the past 12 months.

The improvement in the international situation occasioned by the thaw in super-Power relations has had an immediate impact at the regional level: certain of these developments have been salubrious and crucial in the search for solutions to conflicts hitherto intractable. Others are yet to assume that positive character. These altered circumstances have encouraged speculation in some

(The President)

quarters about the dawning of an era of global peace; understandably, caution and much less optimism are still readily discernible in other quarters. In Afghanistan, Central America, Cyprus, the Persian Gulf and Western Sahara, super-Power rapprochement and the consequent relaxation of tensions have encouraged and enabled our Organization to serve the cause of peace with varying degrees of success.

The ongoing decolonization of Namibia is testimony to the gains which can and should be made when major Powers pull together in the interests of mankind. Undoubtedly, other important developments were crucial to the implementation of the settlement plan for Namibia embodied in Security Council resolution 435 (1978). And yet, elated as we are about Namibia's imminent emergence as a sovereign nation and its possible admission as the 160th State Member of our Organization, we cannot become complacent until our final objective is achieved. The Security Council, as custodian of international peace and security under the Charter of our Organization, must act with unity of purpose to ensure that the Secretary-General and the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) receive the required support to discharge their mandate. The elections, envisaged as an important step in Namibia's transition to independence, must be manifestly free and fair. This Assembly must continue to mirror the collective desire of mankind to bring the colonial era to a long-overdue end.

Regrettably, the close collaboration which has contributed to the search for durable solutions in some regional disputes has not proved comprehensive in scope. In South Africa there has been much rhetoric, but the only evidence of change has been the faces, not the policies of apartheid. The new leadership that emerged from the recent elections must take advantage of the current climate to dismantle apartheid - an abomination which this august Assembly has justifiably described as a crime against humanity and a threat to international peace and security. The

(The President)

special session of the General Assembly planned for December this year must provide the impetus for translating our collective outrage against apartheid into positive action.

The conflict in the Middle East continues to be a source of grave concern to our Organization. Until the Palestinian question, which lies at the core of the crisis, is definitively resolved, all efforts at finding a solution will remain elusive. We must neither be too despondent nor give up the search for a lasting solution. The crisis in the Middle East presents an opportunity for creative diplomacy and concerted action by all the parties concerned. One imaginative approach proposes an international conference to seek a comprehensive solution, at which all parties, including Palestine, are represented. The rights of all people in the region to live within secure borders must be recognized and respected. Half measures, self-serving palliatives or force cannot and will not solve the Palestinian question conclusively. Our Organization must ever stand prepared to play the role expected of it in the resolution of this sanguinary conflict.

The peace and security that the Charter of this Organization has outlined as certain of its fundamental purposes have been denied the people of Lebanon, whose anguish deserves our collective sympathy and attention. We must deplore the ongoing carnage in Lebanon and once again appeal to its leaders to stop this fratricidal war. The Security Council and our Secretary-General must seek fresh initiatives, working closely with the Governments of the region to develop a solution to the civil war in Lebanon.

The opportunities for peacemaking appear greater, even as the need becomes more urgent. In Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Panama, Sri Lanka and the Sudan, situations exist which are incompatible with peace. These must be brought to an end so that the citizens of these societies can engage in their daily endeavours in

(The President)

a secure and non-violent atmosphere. Peace is vital to the economic and social development of our universal society.

Progress in the political field has not been accompanied by corresponding improvements in international economic co-operation. The vast majority of the developing countries have continued to experience deterioration in the economic arena as a result of adverse economic conditions.

An important contemporary issue of grave concern is the external debt crisis confronting developing countries. Until recently, it was fashionable, in some circles, to depict the debt crisis as a technical problem. There is now widespread recognition, however, that the external debt crisis has economic and political, as well as social, consequences. This recognition has been late in coming but it is none the less welcome and deserving of close analysis.

Equally welcome is the shift in international policy towards debt reduction as an essential element in the management of the external debt crisis. For the new policy to succeed, and for its impact to be widely felt, a significant increase in financial resources currently envisaged for debt reduction would be required. The multilateral financial institutions and major donor countries - particularly those with trade surpluses - are the most suitable candidates to provide the additional resources required for this purpose.

(The President)

Large net outflows of capital to developed countries - the result of huge debt service payments and deteriorating terms of trade - have severely crippled the development process in the vast majority of developing countries. The Latin American and African countries have been particularly hard hit. International efforts to support the resumption and recovery of growth and development in Africa and other countries in similar situations need to be strengthened.

The loss of development momentum shows up not only in the dismal economic performance of developing countries, but also in flaring social tensions, riots and political instability in the most volatile of these countries. This must be a source of serious concern and the basis for immediate action.

The special session of the General Assembly on international economic co-operation and, in particular, the reactivation of growth and development in developing countries, should provide the international community with the excellent opportunity it seeks to redress the development losses of this decade. I am hopeful that the special session will also provide fresh political impetus for development co-operation through the formulation of concrete proposals; its conclusions would serve as useful inputs to the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade. The strategy must be a framework, and an all-important one, for articulating commitments and translating them into policies and programmes that foster development in the next decade.

Peace is not secure unless it is founded on, or accompanied by, economic justice. Poverty, hunger and other forms of economic deprivation, which are still so prevalent in many developing countries, represent as much a threat to international security as the pockets of regional conflicts scattered around the globe. The international peace and security we have so assiduously sought to promote stands threatened by lack of progress in the economic field.

(The President)

The inescapable need for international action in certain fields is now widely recognized and accepted. The realization that environmental problems - specifically, acid rain, desertification, depletion of the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect and transboundary movement and disposal of toxic waste - transcend national frontiers and pose severe dangers to the commons, to our world, must give us pause.

Current international collaborative efforts on environmental issues still need to be strengthened, and the proposed United Nations conference in 1992 will provide a timely opportunity to do so. The common interest to co-operate in the area of the environment should, however, spread to and inspire international co-operative action in other fields, so that developing countries may best be enabled to pursue environmentally sound and sustainable policies in the context of resumed growth and development.

Concerted international action is also urgently required to tackle a number of rapidly worsening social problems. The thin line between war and peace, between security and civil disorder, has been further breached by the escalation and prevalence of transborder disasters and crises. Of these problems, global trafficking in drugs, which has reached epidemic proportions, now constitutes a mortal danger to both the structure and the viable functioning of societies and even Governments. It spells dire consequences for our world. The national and international cartels which are spearheading the global drug trafficking must be combated and certainly must be contained.

The importance of this issue mandates rapid intensification and extension of international co-ordinative mechanisms. I urge all Governments represented here to consider ratifying, immediately, the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances adopted in December 1988.

(The President)

We must all work together to redesign and strengthen United Nations programmes and instruments in the narcotics field. Additional resources must be sought and provided.

International terrorism and hostage-taking continue to endanger collective and individual security. No State, no individual, is immune from this contemporary scourge. We can ill afford to be indifferent to this pressing international issue. In the last few months, the United Nations community has lost two of its functionaries: Mr. Bernt Carlsson, former United Nations Commissioner for Namibia, and Lt. Col. William Higgins, a member of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, both victims of terrorist acts. I find it ironical, and certainly despicable and tragic, that functionaries and representatives of our Organization, devoted to peace, should fall victim to violence and terrorism.

The United Nations was founded on the ideals of human solidarity and co-operative action. It is heartening that, despite divergent views in some important aspects, convergence can be noted on matters relating to the enjoyment of human rights. The significance attached by the international community to this matter is manifestly evident in the relevant provisions of our Charter and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, just three years after this Organization was founded. Human rights encompass a broad range of rights - political, economic, socio-cultural and humanitarian. A thread that runs through the enjoyment of human rights is that they invariably promote the quality of life while enhancing the dignity and integrity of the individual citizen. Freedom from hunger, famine, poverty, homelessness and a myriad of other social and economic ills complements the enjoyment of political freedoms and enhances the quality of our everyday life. Indeed, it was in the fight against hunger, famine and poverty, a cause to which he devoted himself, that the life of United States Congressman Mickey Leland was brought to an untimely end.

(The President)

Fifty years ago, the world was gripped in the throes and horrors of war. The League of Nations, the world organization then in existence, should, despite its shortcomings, have been more effective in averting that catastrophe. Instead, the great Powers marginalized it and rendered it moribund. With hindsight the United Nations, the successor Organization, was endowed with a Charter to safeguard international peace and security, to promote economic development, and to protect and guarantee fundamental human rights. Since its creation in 1945, the United Nations has played a key role in the process of decolonization, in combating racism and racial discrimination, in promoting equal opportunities for men and women, and in providing the lead in research and development aimed at ensuring a better life for all. Our Organization, imperfect though it is, has been most resilient and responsive to the increasingly complex problems of our time. Our responsibility is therefore to ensure that in addressing these problems, whether in the field of political, social, humanitarian or economic development, we do not, in any circumstance, marginalize our Organization.

(The President)

Our Organization has suffered the dog days and survived; it in fact enjoys renewed credibility and popularity. This is no accident. For the past nine years one man has tenaciously pursued the ideals of peace and security for all. One man, understanding the perils into which nations fall, has skilfully utilized new currents in world affairs to restore this international framework for global-conflict resolution. One man, with dedication, enormous patience and vision, has placed the organization of international affairs on a civilized footing of quiet diplomacy and negotiation. That man is none other than the Secretary-General, His Excellency Javier Perez de Cuellar, to whom we all owe an enormous debt of gratitude and to whom we must offer sincere congratulations on a job remarkably well done.

Let me end on a personal note. I was only two years old when our Organization was born. At the age of 22, as a captain in my country's army, I participated in the United Nations Peace-Keeping Force in India and Pakistan, where I donned the blue helmet for the first time. That operation enabled me to appreciate firsthand the laudable role of the United Nations in conflict resolution.

That operation also demonstrated that when the conditions are propitious the United Nations can and does achieve results. Ten years later, as Foreign Minister and, since 1984, as Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations, I have been intimately associated with the Organization, and I therefore consider myself representative of a generation heavily influenced by the activities of the United Nations. And it is with precisely those goals and ideals in my mind that I firmly pledge, as President of the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, to work assiduously not only for the success of the session but also for the enhancement of the role of the United Nations in world affairs.

(The President)

Now, as we move into the last decade of this century, let us rally round the United Nations as a centre for harmonizing all our endeavours in the political, social, economic and humanitarian fields. Let us make the United Nations a beacon of peace and hope. Let us, as responsible representatives of our peoples, have a broader vision of world peace, a vision of hope and interdependence, a vision sustained by our commitment to abide by and uphold the obligations of the Charter.

Let us go from this forty-fourth session, every woman, every man and every nation, to build a more humane world, a world of enduring peace and security, a world in which the dignity of each and every person is restored, respected and guaranteed.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.