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Special meeting to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the course of which the United Nations Human Rights Prizes will be awarded

President: Mr. Leopoldo BENITES (Ecuador).

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1. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): It has been a most happy coincidence that in discharging my duties as President of the General Assembly of the United Nations I have been called upon to open the meetings commemorating two extraordinarily important events. Not long ago the International Law Commission, which has had such fruitful results in the progressive development of the law, celebrated 25 years of its existence. Today I have the honour of opening the meeting commemorating a quarter of a century of existence of one of the most important documents of mankind, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was the result of sober reflection and difficult hours of negotiation for human understanding.

2. It would not be accurate to say that we are celebrating today the birth of human rights. Since the times of ancient Greek philosophy, the dignity and value of the human person have been recognized. Roman Stoicism rendered practical and popular the principles which stemmed from Greek Stoic philosophy. Christianity then proclaimed the worth of man as a being possessing an immortal soul, without distinction of race, class or people. English philosophy, which had sought its roots in the political ethics of Locke, was obviously the seed from which the Declaration grew, inspired as it was by the leaders of the French "Enlightenment" and enshrined, with blood and sacrifice, in the great Revolution which France spread throughout the world—the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

3. What makes the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights an original instrument is essentially the fact that it considered man not as an abstract being, an individual alone, but as an interrelated being—the social animal of which Aristotle wrote, that is to say, as part of an organized society. Many of the rights enshrined in the Declaration had already been included in the political constitutions of many States in all continents, which in their dogma

enshrined above all political freedoms, although they almost always overlooked social rights.

4. In many parts of the world, particularly on the continent of Africa, the repulsive method of individual slavery was followed by the equally repulsive and infamous method of collective slavery which colonialism represented. Basing itself on distorted religious interpretations, a State doctrine has emerged in the southern part of the African continent which in no way differs from the racism which appeared to have been crushed in the Second World War. The new State racism bore the Afrikaaner name which today symbolizes racial discrimination, namely, *apartheid*.

5. As we commemorate the 25 years of existence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights we must ask ourselves—an examination for our consciences, as it were—whether the ideals which were enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and which were later developed in covenants and conventions, have really become positive rights or whether they are mere statements of options and freedoms. This is a matter of vital importance. It is not enough to enshrine rights or options unless means are created to make them effective. Unlike mere ethical principles, which may carry neither a sanction nor an obligation, legal principles must be based on compulsion, on the ability to have them enforced in practice and to provide for sanctions in case of non-observance.

6. That is perhaps the great task that lies ahead, and it is to be hoped that in the years following this first quarter-century, active and positive work will be done to endow the rights that have been created with a means for their effective and mandatory exercise.

7. Today, in this ceremony, we must deplore the fact that the violation of one of the most essential human rights prevents us from having among us an exemplary fighter for brotherhood and freedom in the fulfilment of his Christian priestly mission, Bishop Muzorewa, in violation of article 13 of the Declaration we are today commemorating.

8. Those of us who have devoted our lives with love and faith to the work of the United Nations must hand on the burning torch to younger hands which will labour in a similar cause. And, as the session at which the Assembly has honoured me by electing me President draws to a close, this is my message for today: let the young generation take over the task of giving practical and real effect to what we have so far created as ideal rights.

9. Precisely at the same time as this session, the Decade of Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination is under way. Racism and racial discrimination are reasons for shame and opprobrium for mankind. Whether it is for

religious principles which consider in themselves the value and dignity of the human being as being paramount, or for moral principles or because of any other considerations, man is an end in himself, as stated in the philosophy of Kant which none can imitate. The United Nations Charter came into being as a result of a war which had as one of its causes the fight against racism, understood as the superiority of one race over the others, and therefore enshrined the principle of the equality of human beings irrespective of race. The very concept of race is merely a subject discussed by a pseudo-science which is in no way justified as a basis for State policy or as a custom enshrined by economic or social supremacy. It is my hope that this decade will have really universal significance and will equally include the fight against the discrimination exercised against African peoples or discrimination which has become customary in any part of the world because of a supposed racial difference which keeps men separate or does not provide them with the means to be incorporated into national entities.

10. I hope that in the future we shall fight indefatigably for human unity and brotherhood in a world of justice and freedom.

11. The SECRETARY-GENERAL: This meeting has two important purposes: to commemorate an event of historic significance and to dedicate ourselves again to the fulfilment of the purposes and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by the General Assembly in Paris 25 years ago.

12. The Universal Declaration was the first occasion in history when the inalienable rights of all individuals were formally established. It was an expression in simple and clear language of the principles which should govern human relations. It represented faith in the value of the individual and in the conviction that politics is about people. It created standards by which all must be judged. It represented, it is true, an ideal. It pointed towards a goal and did not establish a fact. The authors knew that mankind would not be transformed overnight and that achievement of their purpose would be a long, difficult and often frustrating process.

13. It is well that we remind ourselves of the realism, as well as the idealism, of those who created that great Declaration. It could be argued that respect for human rights has not been improved since 1948, and certainly it would be wrong to say that the fundamental freedoms set out in the Declaration have been universally achieved. We know that that is not the case. We are still confronted daily by evidence of man's inhumanity to man. We know that the evils of racism, colonialism, deprivation of political freedoms, arbitrary arrest and discrimination of all kinds have not been eliminated. We in the United Nations see this—and we know, also, that we see and hear only a fraction of the misery of mankind. Two thirds of humanity live under conditions of poverty. There can be no real progress while so many of our fellow-citizens of this planet are denied the basic rights to work, to live in health and to receive an education.

14. The United Nations reflects two apparently contradictory objectives. On the one hand, it consists of independent, sovereign nations bound by the provisions of Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter regarding non-interference in internal affairs. But elsewhere in the Charter, and even more

clearly in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the duty of the world Organization to concern itself with the rights of individuals is clearly emphasized.

15. This contradiction persists, and it remains one of the central problems facing the United Nations. As I have emphasized in the introduction to my annual report [*A/9001/Add. I*], there must be a serious attempt to reconcile those two requirements. For it is not possible to treat human rights in isolation. Issues of economic imbalances, development priorities, population increases, environmental factors, the use of natural resources, health and educational problems—all those elements, and many more, are closely interrelated, and have a considerable impact upon the rights of the individual.

16. The link between human rights and international politics is fundamental. The concept of "the international conscience" is a reality, and we often underestimate the effectiveness of agreed international standards of conduct. Similarly, we sometimes forget the power of international public opinion, that major and unique phenomenon of our times. We have seen this in the long struggle against colonialism. This struggle has not yet been fully won, but the substantial achievements since 1948 should be a profound encouragement to us to complete the process of decolonization.

17. There are occasions, looking at the world as it is, and conscious of what it should be, when a compassionate person is dominated by emotions of despair. The problems are so vast, so intractable, so profound. How can we hope to resolve them, to fulfil the noble ideals of the Charter and the Universal Declaration?

18. We must frankly recognize that the gulf between aspirations and realities will always exist. Our task is to reduce that gulf—not to sell visions, but to work towards a realistic fulfilment of goals which are high but which are attainable. While admitting failures and disappointments, we must never lose sight of the ideal. If we abandon that ideal—a world living in harmony, in which true equality exists—we will lose something in ourselves, we will have abandoned our faith, and we will have betrayed our trust. For we are trustees for all humanity.

19. Thus, to be realistic does not mean that we should surrender to helplessness. On the contrary, it must spur us on to renewed endeavour. The achievements of the United Nations in the field of human rights are very considerable. The principles of the Universal Declaration are embodied in the constitutions of many Member States of the United Nations, and reflected in their legislation. It is my hope that the human rights Covenants which have been adopted since 1966 will be ratified by all nations and will be sincerely honoured.

20. At the heart of the matter lies our obligation under the Charter "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". This Organization has never been, and must never be, indifferent to the calls of mankind to fulfil this obligation. Let us make that our objective. Let it be our priority, so that, eventually, the aspirations of the authors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will

be fulfilled, and so that the trust placed in us by all mankind will be fully vindicated. I am confident that we can achieve this goal.

21. Before concluding, I should like to express my warm congratulations to the distinguished recipients of the Human Rights Prizes for 1973. The Prizes, we know, are richly deserved and emphasize the role which each has played in the furtherance of the rights of all mankind, to which the United Nations has a solemn and enduring obligation. In that task, the role of individuals dedicated to that cause is crucial, and I express to the recipients my admiration and gratitude for their contributions.

22. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his magnificent statement.

23. I should like to announce now that many messages have been received, and that two of these messages will be read out because they have been addressed to us by Heads of State. May I request the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs to read out the messages we have received from Heads of State.

24. Mr. MORSE (Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs): The first is a message addressed to "His Excellency Kurt Waldheim, United Nations, New York," from the Head of State of the Republic of Afghanistan, the Honourable Mohammed Daoud:

"It is with great pleasure that the Republic of Afghanistan participates in celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and congratulates Your Excellency on this auspicious occasion. In reaffirming our conviction in the principles set forth in the Declaration, we believe a world-wide celebration of this anniversary will greatly contribute in further strengthening the universal realization of these principles as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the objective set forth in the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. The Government of the Republic of Afghanistan expresses sincere appreciation for the role played by Your Excellency in this respect and wishes you continued success in your, and the world Organization's, efforts towards attaining these noble objectives."

25. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next message is from His Holiness the Pope, and I request the Under-Secretary-General to be so good as to read it out.

26. Mr. MORSE (Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs): The message reads as follows:

"To His Excellency Mr. Leopoldo Benites, President of the twenty-eighth General Assembly of the United Nations:

"Impelled by the consciousness of our mission to render immediate, living and actual to men the message of salvation which Christ proclaimed, we have not failed during our pontificate repeatedly to offer our moral support to

the United Nations activities in favour of justice, peace and progress of all the peoples of the world.

"As this eminent international Assembly now prepares to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we desire once more to express to you our great confidence, and at the same time our firm approval, of the continuing commitment of the United Nations Organization to promote, in an ever clearer, more authoritative and more effective manner, respect for the fundamental rights of man.

"As we stated on another occasion, the Declaration of Human Rights 'in our view remains one of the finest titles to glory' (Message for the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the United Nations Organization, AAS LXII (1970), p. 684) for your Organization, especially when one evaluates the importance which is attributed to it as a sure path to peace. In reality, peace and rights are two benefits directly related to each other as cause and effect. There can be no peace where there is no respect for, no defence and no promotion of human rights. While promotion of the rights of the human person leads to peace, at the same time, peace contributes towards the realization of this aim.

"We cannot, then, remain indifferent in the face of the urgent need to construct a human coexistence which will everywhere guarantee to the individual, to communities, and particularly to minority groups, the right to life, to personal and social dignity, to development in a safe and improved environment, and to an equitable division of nature's resources and the fruits of civilization.

"The Church, though concerned above all with the rights of God', as we said last year to the Secretary-General, Dr. Kurt Waldheim, 'can never cease to be concerned with the rights of man, created in the image and likeness of his Creator. She feels herself to be wounded when the rights of one man are ignored or violated, whoever he may be and wherever this may occur' (Address to the new Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization, AAS LXIV (1972), p. 215).

"For this reason the Holy See gives its full moral support to the common ideal contained in the Universal Declaration, as also to the progressive affirmation of the human rights which are expressed in it.

"The rights of man are based upon the recognition of the dignity of all human beings and upon their equality and brotherhood. The duty of respecting these rights is a duty which is universal. The promotion of these rights is a factor for peace, and their violation is a cause of tensions and disturbances, even in the international sphere.

"If it is in the interest of States to co-operate in scientific, economic, technological and ecological matters, it is even more in their interest to collaborate in the safeguarding and promotion of human rights. The United Nations Charter expressly obliges them to pursue this objective.

"The objection is sometimes raised that this collaboration of all States in promoting the rights of man constitutes interference in internal affairs. But surely it is true that the most certain means for a State to avoid external interference is precisely for it to recognize and ensure that

in the territories under its jurisdiction fundamental rights and liberties are respected.

"Without wishing to enter into the merits of the individual formulations, we consider that this outstanding document remains the expression of a more mature and more definite awareness of the question of the rights of the human person, and continues to represent the secure basis for the recognition of every man's title to worthy citizenship in the community of peoples.

"It would indeed be deplorable for mankind if this solemn pronouncement were to be reduced to an empty recognition of values or to an abstract doctrinal principle without a concrete and increasingly coherent application in the contemporary world, as you yourself rightly pointed out when you assumed the presidency of this honourable Assembly.

"We are well aware that such application on the part of the public authorities is not without difficulties, but a concerted effort is required in order to ensure that these rights are respected and promoted by those with the power and the duty to do so, and that the awareness of the fundamental human rights and liberties of man is steadily developed among peoples. The co-operation of everyone must be sought to ensure that these principles are respected 'by all, everywhere and for all' (Message to the Teheran Conference for the Twentieth Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, AAS LX (1968), p. 285). Is it really possible then without grave danger for the peaceful coexistence of peoples to remain indifferent in the face of the many grave and often systematic violations of those human rights clearly proclaimed in the Declaration as universal, inviolable and inalienable?

"We cannot conceal our serious anxiety at the persistence and aggravation of situations which we bitterly deplore—situations such as racial and ethnic discrimination; obstacles to the self-determination of peoples; the repeated violations of the sacred right to religious liberty in its various aspects and the absence of an international agreement supporting this right and specifying its consequences; the repression of the freedom to express wholesome opinions; the inhumane treatment of prisoners; the violent and systematic elimination of political opponents; other forms of violence and attacks on human life, especially on life in the womb. To all the silent victims of injustice we lend our voice of protest and of entreaty. But mere denunciation, often too late or ineffective, is not sufficient. There must be an analysis of the deep-rooted causes of such situations and a firm commitment to face up to them and resolve them correctly.

"It is encouraging, however, to note that the men of our time are showing that they are not insensible to the fundamental values contained in the Universal Declaration. Is not the ever increasing number of denunciations and of recriminations in fact a significant symptom of this increasing sensibility in the face of the multiplication of offences against the inalienable liberties of man, both as an individual and in the community?

We have learned with lively interest and deep satisfaction that this General Assembly, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration, will hold a special session at which there will be pro-

claimed the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. This pre-eminently human undertaking will once again find the Holy See and the United Nations in close accord, albeit on different levels and with different means, in a common effort to defend and protect the freedom and dignity of every man and of every group, without distinction of race, colour, language, creed or any particular social condition.

"In this message we also wish to underline the value and importance of the other documents on the rights of man previously approved by the United Nations. These documents, which came into being in accordance with the spirit and on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, represent a sure step forward in the promotion and concrete safeguarding of certain of those rights, and seek to guarantee their careful and faithful application. Their ratification will ensure their effectiveness in both national and international circles. The Holy See gives its moral adherence and offers its support to the legitimate and praiseworthy aspirations to which these documents are directed.

"While the fundamental rights of man represent a common good for the whole of mankind on its path towards the conquest of peace, it is necessary that all men, ever more conscious of this reality, should realize that in this sphere to speak of rights is the same as spelling out its duties.

"Thus we reiterate our good wishes to your noble and eminent Assembly, convinced as we are that it will continue tirelessly to promote among the nations respect for and application of the principles solemnly enunciated in the Universal Declaration, with a sincere effort to transform the human family into a world community of brothers in which all the sons of men can lead a life worthy of the sons of God."

27. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I must announce that we have furthermore received messages from such Heads of Government as the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, His Excellency Willy Brandt; the Government of the Netherlands; the Prime Minister of France; and from organizations such as the Council of Europe. These will be distributed as press releases.

28. On this occasion, I have invited the following persons to address the Assembly: the President of the Economic and Social Council, the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, the Chairman of the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee of the General Assembly, two of those who participated in the drafting of the Declaration, the winners of the Human Rights Prizes who have been able to be present and the representatives of those who are absent.

29. Accordingly I now give the floor to the President of the Economic and Social Council, His Excellency, Dr. Sergio Armando Frazão of Brazil.

30. Mr. FRAZÃO (Brazil): The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which we are celebrating today, is certainly an occasion for joy and self-congratulation, but it should also compel us to assess what has been accomplished. It poses a new challenge, the

challenge that commands self-examination, reflection and the programming of future activities bound to enhance the lot of human beings.

31. Twenty-seven years ago the Commission on Human Rights, a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, over which I now have the honour to preside, was established as a means of helping to implement the principles of the Charter. At that time the conscience of the international community was profoundly traumatized by the assaults of totalitarian régimes on individual dignity and fundamental freedoms. The need was felt for a sort of Magna Carta of mankind, for a code whose principles would be universally applied. The intrinsic value of the provisions of the Declaration that was then born connects it closely with the Charter, to the ideals and objectives which were responsible for the foundation of this Organization. Its binding force derives from the fact that the adoption of the Declaration was the end-product of a consensus that had been carefully arrived at; in other words, it rests on legal and moral elements common to our different cultures, ideologies, political systems, stages of economic and social development and ways of life.

32. In the field of human rights and connected matters, the accomplishments of the United Nations in this quarter of a century warrant optimism. If not yet enough, much has been done to protest and assure the dignity of man; and the consciousness that this should be our constant aim became increasingly stronger. That consciousness pervaded and motivated our attitudes concerning some of the most important problems of our times; it was to a very large extent instrumental in the carrying out of the process responsible for the access to independence of so many nations and for the growing eagerness for economic development and social progress. This eagerness is all the more justified as national independence is but a first step towards the fulfillment of individual goals, and for the actual participation in the international decision-making process that will render economic and social well-being something more than a dream in so many parts of the world.

33. May I recall that the growing gap between developed and developing nations jeopardizes the very foundation of the Declaration, and that was the reason why the drafters of the first United Nations Development Decade endeavoured to direct the attention of the world towards the dangers that a most uneven international distribution of wealth posed to peace, security, and principally to human rights. Unfortunately, the Second Development Decade has yet to meet our expectations.

34. Moreover, the open sore of racial discrimination still remains to be healed. For those who suffer from it, it is hardly a consolation that 75 countries have already ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination [*resolution 2106 A (XX)*].

35. Indeed, much remains to be done for the eradication of racial prejudice and *apartheid*, which impose intolerable suffering upon millions of people.

36. Convinced of the necessity of correcting this situation, the General Assembly, through the recently adopted resolution 3057 (XXVIII), entrusted the Economic and Social

Council with the co-ordination, review and appraisal of the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, a most significant initiative that is being launched today.

37. We can also say with satisfaction that besides the major steps taken in the area of decolonization and the progress made in combating racial inequality, important strides have been made in these last 25 years, particularly in the fields of equality of opportunity, social justice, religious tolerance, protection of children, the old and the aged, and concerning the status of women.

38. Many other provisions of the Universal Declaration, however, still await full and urgent implementation. In developing countries, the difficulties encountered to implement them are mainly by-products of the actual situation of under-development. I refer chiefly to basic social benefits, full access to work, adequate standards of living in terms of health and well-being, free and universally available education, the right of enjoyment of the arts and a share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

39. These fundamental rights, explicitly referred to in different paragraphs of the Declaration, remain for millions of people as unattainable as the crock of gold at the end of the rainbow, and that is so because during this quarter of a century we were not able to respond adequately to the challenge that confronts this Organization: the eradication of under-development within a new system of collective economic security, which will be a basic prerequisite of social progress and, by implication, of world-wide peace and political security.

40. The twenty-first session of the General Assembly took the very constructive initiative of setting up prizes to be granted to individuals making outstanding contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms [*resolution 2217 (XX), annex*]. As President of the Economic and Social Council, I had the privilege of participating in the Special Committee which was entrusted with the gratifying task of selecting the recipients of the awards from among so many nominees. The personalities selected are certainly outstanding; the consensus of the Committee was to present them as examples for present and future generations.

41. Today, we have the honour and the pleasure of the presence among us of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and Professor Maria Lavallo-Urbina. We profoundly regret that the illegal and racist régime of Rhodesia once again defied the United Nations by denying an exit visa to Bishop Abel Muzorewa. His very absence strikes us—and I think one can say no more—as an evidence that the Committee was right in honouring him for his works and deeds for improving the fate of the Zimbabwe people. U Thant has also been unable, for reasons of health, to be present here today. Even more unfortunately, we have been deprived forever of Wilfred Jenks and Professor Taha Hussein. To their families I express my deep condolences on their loss, which is also a loss to the international society.

42. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Chairman of the Social, Humanitarian and

Cultural Committee of the General Assembly, Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, of Lebanon.

43. Mr. MAHMASSANI (Lebanon), Chairman of the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee: I am particularly pleased and honoured to address this Assembly, as Chairman of the Third Committee, on this historic occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. I am equally honoured to do so as a representative from Lebanon, since, at the time of its adoption, the Chairman of the Third Committee, Dr. Charles Malik, also hailing from Lebanon, had the privilege of proclaiming the Declaration before the General Assembly.

44. It was towards midnight on 10 December 1948 when the General Assembly, meeting in Paris for its third regular session¹, formally approved the Declaration, which laid down specific principles guaranteeing rights and freedoms to all individuals throughout the world. The Declaration further embodied man's highest aspirations for freedom and human dignity, for tolerance and non-discrimination, and for universal brotherhood. These principles are as valid and as vital today as they were 25 years ago, when first enunciated.

45. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is, in a sense, a code of life for our modern world, harmonizing a wide range of beliefs, concepts, and philosophies. It proclaims all men and women to be members of one human family, whatever their sex, colour, family or financial status, or their religious and political beliefs. In theory, it affirms that man is a free being whose inviolability is assured, and whose well-being is sacred. In practice, it stipulates that man is at liberty to think and to express himself as he pleases, to choose his own religion, to marry whomever he wishes, and to own his own home and property. Furthermore, it provides for his protection from hunger and sickness, from natural disaster and ill-devised aggression. It guarantees his share in the enjoyment of arts and sciences, in the fruits of education, and in the benefits of social and technological advances.

46. The Declaration was made clear and unequivocal in its wording. It announced to men and women everywhere—"these are the rights and freedoms which are yours as members of the human family! It is up to you to claim them, enjoy them, and protect them". Moreover, it made it possible for all men and women to be fully conscious of their rights as human beings.

47. The work of the Third Committee over the past 25 years has been the natural outgrowth of the original fervour and impetus furnished by the adoption of the Declaration. Only after the international community had come to an understanding over the extent and content of man's human rights and fundamental freedoms, was it possible for Governments to pledge themselves to the observance of those rights and to set up international machinery to deal with any of their violations.

Official Records of the General Assembly, Third Session, Plenary Meetings, 183rd meeting.

48. In implementing the Declaration, the Third Committee has produced over 15 instruments to carry out its principles. This year, it has adopted the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of *Apartheid* [resolution 3068 (XXVIII)]. Through the preparation of these instruments, and even more through the formulation of numerous draft resolutions and recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly, the Committee has attempted to assist the international community in fulfilling its solemn obligations, to promote and encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to help each individual achieve the maximum freedom and dignity he can. It has also made substantial progress in defining standards for the enjoyment and protection of those rights. Now, on its recommendation, the General Assembly has decided to proclaim the forthcoming 10-year period as the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. Thus, beginning today, we initiate a world-wide campaign to make the peoples of the world fully aware of the evils of racial discrimination and to urge them to join together in combating these evils. This is undoubtedly one of the urgent tasks of mankind at the international as well as at the national level.

49. The spreading of knowledge of the provisions of the Universal Declaration to all concerned throughout the world and the dissemination of other solemnly proclaimed international instruments which have found their source and inspiration in the Declaration, have greatly helped to alert the conscience of humanity to the need for greater justice, for the equality of treatment and of universal respect for the dignity of each human being.

50. In spite of all these advances, however, we must pause in the midst of our celebrations to consider to what degree we have fulfilled the original aspirations of the founding fathers, and how much further we must move in order to complete fully our objectives. For, to our dismay, many peoples continue to be the object of discrimination, oppression, and injustice by their fellow men. In our era of staggering technical and scientific advances, and of social progress, there still exist peoples who are fighting to shake off colonial domination and other forms of dependence, in order to defend and to define their national identities. Colonialism, *apartheid*, and military occupation constitute the most flagrant violations of the dignity and worth of the human person, and of the United Nations Charter as well. Any struggle for liberation that is waged against these abuses is a just and eloquent expression of the rights and aspirations of all peoples. The conscience of man cannot accept such odious practices nor can it accept racial discrimination and economic exploitation. It cannot ignore the tragic plight of victims of armed conflicts. It cannot tolerate the military occupation of the territories of sovereign States which have put their trust in the United Nations and have maintained their faith in its lofty ideals. And last, but by no means least, it cannot disregard the toll exacted by abject poverty, malnutrition, ill-health, and illiteracy.

51. Peace and security cannot prevail in today's world unless the fundamental rights and freedoms of every man are fulfilled. The genuine exercise of these rights cannot be secured without political independence for all, without the full affirmation of the sovereignty of each nation, and with-

out strict respect for each person's and each nation's right to self-determination.

52. From the observance of this twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights there should emerge a renewal of dedication to its principles and a firm determination to transform them into realities. We must see to it that the peoples of the world, their Governments, and the United Nations, each in their respective sphere of activity, strive to eliminate the existing gap between the idealism of the Declaration and the stark realities of cruel and inhuman behaviour still manifest in various parts of the world today. The endeavour to make conditions in the world conform to the universally accepted principles and standards of human rights is both urgent and noble.

53. Permit me, Mr. President, to conclude by expressing my profound congratulations and tributes to the distinguished recipients of the Human Rights Prizes for 1973.

54. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Radha Krishna Ramphul, Permanent Representative of Mauritius.

55. Mr. RAMPHUL (Mauritius), Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights: My beloved African brother, Bishop Muzorewa, is conspicuous by his absence among us today as we observe the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly, 25 years ago in Paris. A quarter of a century ago the membership of the United Nations was a limited one, hardly representative of the different parts of the world, but it was hoped by most States Members of the United Nations then that the other parts of the international bill of human rights would be completed shortly thereafter, thereby providing guide-lines to the peoples and States, as well as to the United Nations family of organizations, on progress towards greater and more meaningful freedom and liberty.

56. It proved more difficult than was expected to adopt the other parts of the international bill of human rights, which became known as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [*resolution 2200 (XXI), annex*]. These Covenants, together with the Optional Protocol relating to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which concerns submission of communications by individuals and groups, was finally adopted by the General Assembly only in 1966, when the membership of the United Nations had more than doubled. It is significant that the definitions of the rights and freedoms included in these Covenants were drawn up in a protracted fashion and subject to considerable discussion and argumentation, mainly between the countries which were States Members of the United Nations from the beginning and those few others which joined during the 1950s, with the conspicuous absence of what is now called the third world.

57. When the Assembly finally came to adopt the measures of implementation of the two Covenants in 1966, with a much larger membership, it was an act of great faith on the part of the newly admitted Member States to dispense with

their indisputable right to reopen discussion on many definitions of the rights and freedoms which had been adopted, sometimes by close votes, by a limited number of countries and without the benefit of the vast majority of the States Members of the United Nations which, perhaps, know better than anyone else what it is to be deprived of most of the rights and freedoms which are enshrined now in the Declaration as well as in the Covenants. Good will was shown in the unanimous adoption of the two Covenants, which does not mean that every country assented to them; but it is significant that those few, like South Africa, were absent when the voting in the plenary took place. Such unanimity had been shown the previous year when the Assembly had adopted the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. That Convention which, if I may say so, is likely to be the first universally accepted instrument on human rights, was prepared in a record time of two years, compared to the many years which were spent on the preparation of the Covenants.

58. This is neither the place, nor would it serve any purpose, to go into the reasons for the delay in the adoption of the Covenants, but it must be mentioned that the passage of time did not always improve the provisions of the Covenants, and the measures of implementation which they contain are weaker than those to be found in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Moreover, the year in which the Covenants were adopted suffered from the shock created by the decision of the International Court of Justice on the question of Namibia that led to a summary rejection of the proposals in the Covenants adopted by the Commission on Human Rights, which would have given some role to the International Court of Justice on international judicial determination of disputes on matters relating to interpretation and application of the Covenants, as well as some advisory functions.

59. We are hopeful, however, that in due course not only the Covenants, but also other instruments relating to human rights, will be suitably amended under the revision procedures provided in them, or by protocols and other appropriate means, to bring about a greater realization and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and to establish a co-ordinated and well-balanced machinery of means of implementing them at the national, regional and international levels.

60. I may add that, because of the delay in the ratifications of the Covenants, the United Nations is still awaiting the coming into force of those international standards which will guide it in a more binding fashion, particularly in matters relating to economic, social and cultural rights. Thus when the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights comes into force and the report of progress in the recognition and enjoyment of those rights is submitted to the Economic and Social Council under a programme to be worked out by it with States parties to the Covenant and with the specialized agencies, the Council will, for the first time, understand and realize the specific goals that it has to achieve and that the States Members of the United Nations have agreed under Article 56 of the Charter of the United Nations to achieve jointly and separately in co-operation with this Organization.

61. The Council has often lacked a sense of purpose and knowledge of specific aims which could have helped it to perform its true functions as a co-ordinator of economic and social progress in the world in larger freedom. It would have helped it to have avoided the proliferation of many offices, programmes and *ad hoc* experiments. It is to be earnestly hoped that with the enlargement of the Council, which is already a fact, the Covenants, and particularly the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, will soon come into force and provide the Council with that guide-line which it has lacked up to now.

62. I have spent some time in referring to the International Bill of Human Rights because that was the only programme in the field of human rights which had been foreseen at San Francisco and that was later carried out. Apart from that, there was no real programme in the United Nations on human rights until this session of the Assembly, when the programme for the decade against racism and racial discrimination is being launched, on this day of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

63. In fact, there has been no systematic approach to human rights in the United Nations and its family of organizations. Lack of any systematic approach has meant proliferation and discussion of many items, suggested on an *ad hoc* basis, some of which have led to fruitful results, while of many others it may be said without exaggeration that they have been either lost, became perfunctory or have fizzled out. Further, much of the effort of the United Nations in the field of human rights, it has been claimed, has been spent on political wrangling or in concentration on politically motivated items. Again, some have voiced the view that there is no real public support for human rights actions of the United Nations because of the absence of any coherent plans or programmes and because of their political contents. May I be allowed to say that the intense political and ideological in-fighting, which went on in the United Nations well past the first decade of the existence of the Organization, may be said to have been the period of lost opportunity by the United Nations in achieving more practical and concrete results in the field of human rights. If those who refer to the present politically motivated action in human rights are alluding to an overwhelming consideration of the United Nations with the question of *apartheid*, segregation and racial discrimination in southern Africa, let me only refer back to the extraordinarily clear statement made on the subject by my beloved and revered elder brother, President Nyerere of the United Republic of Tanzania, who said during the commemorative meetings of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations that:

“In particular, the United Nations has to act against the forces of racialism and colonialism, for these represent the kind of tyranny and oppression which deny all hope to men, and which therefore force them to express their humanity through violence. A man can change his religion if he wishes; he can accept a different political belief—or in both cases give the appearance of doing so—if this would relieve him of intolerable circumstances. But no man can change his colour or his race. And if he suffers because of it, he must either become less than a man, or he must fight. And for good or evil, mankind has been so created that many will refuse to acquiesce in their

own degradation; they will destroy peace rather than suffer under it.”²

64. I, myself, had the honour, as Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, to speak in Geneva on 21 March of this year on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and to refer to the pledge of the peoples of the United Nations in the Preamble to the Charter to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to point out that there is no doubt that the reference in the Charter to the dignity and worth of the human person will, in time, prove to have been the most revolutionary and momentous world ever adopted for the future of mankind. My words have found their most significant echo in the programme for the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination which the Assembly is proclaiming today. It has also been supported by better regard which the United Nations and its family of organizations are giving to questions relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms in their programmes concerning population, economic development, human environment, disarmament, international security, solidarity and peace, and in other special areas of concern like those relating to children, youth, women, the elderly and the aged. We still need a well-thought-out, co-ordinated, multidisciplinary approach if we are to avoid long-term disunity and problems.

65. I need not repeat here what I said on the same occasion, on 21 March 1973, namely, that a larger measure of support and responsibility must be shown by the great Powers. They should neither shirk responsibility nor blame others when it is most often their own lack of co-operation to grapple with the real causes, or to lend support to essential programmes and policies, which have led the United Nations to ineffective action and have caused so much frustration and unhappiness in the world. The world should not forget that, even as the Charter was being signed at San Francisco, there were already clear indications of the emergence of new sovereign States which would have a tremendous impact on ideas, needs and aspirations of all peoples. Coupled with the unparalleled developments in science, technology and communications, these were bound to change the practical basis of life.

66. While we have shown in practice that Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter of the United Nations does not emasculate us in our work on human rights, we are equally aware that the United Nations as at present constituted is not a supranational Organization. We are also conscious of the lack of real trust and confidence displayed in human rights efforts, both of which, by the way, are created and influenced by the actions and inaction of the Member States and of the Secretariat. It is accordingly essential to place greater emphasis than ever before on the provisions of Articles 13, 55 and 56 of the Charter and assist in the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction. This realization of human rights must take place primarily within the countries. The objective of the Charter provisions on human rights is basically to promote and encourage the emergence of conditions,

² *Ibid.*, Twenty-fifth Session, Plenary Meetings, 1867th meeting, para. 42.

legal and otherwise, under which, in mutual understanding and confidence, both Governments and people will fully realize and safeguard human rights and fundamental freedoms. No amount of international sophistry, or machinery, or offices, or confrontation procedures, is going to advance us further without the will and co-operation of peoples and Governments, or without knowledgeable, conscientious, dedicated and unselfish international Secretariat officials. This does not mean that there will not be controversies in the United Nations about human rights which may provoke Member States to attack one another, or that we can stop adoption of proposals and recommendations deriving solely from idealistic or ideological motives, or that we can do away with tendencies to express contrasting opinions and indulge in rhetoric, because in matters of human freedom, emotion and instinct may often prevail. . . . restraint and intelligence.

67. What we need, however, is greater assistance to States in pursuing practical programmes and policies, at their request, which may be direct or which may be encouraged through United Nations bodies, such as well-planned and purposeful training courses and work-shops at the national, subregional and regional levels to acquaint policy makers and key people with methods and techniques best suited to realizing different rights and freedoms within the context of their history, tradition and legal and other systems. What do we know, for example, of community efforts, conciliation procedures, and other techniques and methods used to achieve recognition and enjoyment of human rights in various countries? Seminars, which were once intended to bring knowledge of such matters, must not duplicate, as they seem to have been doing in the recent past, the meetings of commissions and other bodies of the United Nations. There must also be a systematic effort at collecting and disseminating information by providing for national correspondents and commissions on human rights. In this way, we would not only know about those community programmes, policies, techniques, methods and procedures, to which I have just referred, but we might well find that complaints and allegations, as well as destructiveness and violence, are misunderstood because of lack of knowledge of the proper context within which they take place. Such an exchange and knowledge of what goes on may well surprise many how far countries, and not necessarily the so-called industrially advanced countries, have gone beyond the use of neolithic tools and methods in devising means to realize human rights.

68. At the international level a more systematic approach might be attempted by the Commission on Human Rights. For example, the Commission could concentrate on civil and political rights questions during one year, on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights another year, and in other years on other questions, such as those relating to self-determination, to human rights and population, science and technology and human rights, human environment and settlement, human rights and criminal law, procedure and the police, as well as the prisons, and so on. I could make many suggestions and outline numerous programmes. Suffice it to say that from what I have said there is every need to get away from complacency in looking at the present and future work in the field of human rights on this twenty-fifth anniversary of the proclamation of the Universal Declaration.

69. I should also like to encourage this Assembly to suggest to United Nations bodies, including the Secretariat, to pay greater attention to the encouragement within nations, subregions and regions of the role that can be played in self-discipline and self-regulation by many professions, occupations, and organizations connected in one way or another with the enjoyment of human rights. In particular, this would include those concerned with Government, such as judges, administrators and parliamentarians. It would include various forms of mass media and the personnel who work in them. It would include lawyers, police, social workers and all kinds of governmental and non-governmental bodies. All of them should be encouraged to consider the desirability of adopting codes of conduct and ethics concerning the exercise of their legitimate functions. Self-discipline and self-regulation by means of codes of ethics and honour constitute methods by which the community asserts its rights to be protected against practices which impinge upon the enjoyment of human rights without the necessity of State intervention. They arise from the belief that many abuses are impossible to define in adequate legal terms, and that in many walks of life it may be inadvisable for the law to deal with the matter in detail since they may lead to interference with fundamental freedoms. It may well be the case that the setting up of standards to check abuses, such as in codes of conduct, of honour and of ethics, that are subject to self-regulation and self-discipline, with bodies to ensure their observance and, perhaps, also to provide for sanctions, mostly within various professions, occupations and organizations outside the Government, has an important part to play in the promotion and protection of human rights. Establishment of such standards and machinery may also give greater hope to the turbulent feeling amongst the youth of the world who may well find greater meaning in participation in the community that is conscious of its rights and obligations and is conscientious in its devotion to human rights.

70. Although I have been referring to efforts at the national, sub-regional and regional levels, I should remind the Assembly that the United Nations has not been unconscious of the usefulness of such methods and, in fact, a text of an international code of ethics for information personnel was prepared by the now defunct Sub-Commission of Experts on Freedom of Information and of the Press.³ The Code, in its draft form, had been sent to 500 organizations for comment, and the majority of them were of the opinion that it would serve a useful purpose. But the United Nations has not pursued the matter since General Assembly resolution 838 (IX) of 17 December 1954, because at that time, information enterprises and national and international associations did not support an international professional conference to prepare the final text of such a code. This situation, however, prevailed nearly 20 years ago and there is no reason why a fresh effort should not be made to hold an international non-governmental professional conference on the code of ethics in an area of human rights activity where it could have an immense impact on promoting respect for human rights.

71. May I in closing refer to what I consider to be one of the pivotal points around which progress in the world today must be based, namely a deliberate and concerted attack on

³ See document ST/SAO/12.

the causes of inequality. The causes and answers will differ from society to society. They must be sought in the specific nature of each country and each historical experience. It is, however, an urgent task requiring vision, courage and honesty. I look forward to that day when we shall meet each other not as races, not in the stereotyped role privilege gives to us or inequality demands of us, but with the freedom to build, within our nations and across nations, the new world for which our children hope and on which our youth insist.

72. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I shall now call on two of the personalities who participated in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and who honour us with their presence today. First, His Excellency Mr. Jamil Baroodi of Saudi Arabia. I invite him to come to the rostrum.

73. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia): Ah, how well I remember that momentous evening in December at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris. Ah, how well I remember that day in December when our fondest hopes ran high. Twenty-five years ago, on 10 December, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Sixty million people had lost their lives and perhaps as many millions were maimed, disabled or rendered destitute, due to the inhumanity of man to man as a result of the Second World War.

74. The United Nations Charter, signed on 26 June 1945 in San Francisco, expressed the determination of the peoples of the United Nations to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war which had brought untold suffering, and, at the same time, reaffirmed faith in fundamental human rights. Hence, the genesis of the Declaration we are celebrating today lies in the Charter. We all had hoped that once the Declaration was publicised, the world would stand a better chance to establish peace on earth. However, some of us noted that the Declaration was not legally binding, and took upon ourselves the task of formulating two international covenants or treaties for the protection of the basic rights of man.

75. Had it not been for the Universal Declaration, it is quite probable that the two international Covenants, as well as other cognate declarations and conventions, would never have seen the light of day in the United Nations. It can therefore be safely said that the Universal Declaration became the foundation upon which all human rights declarations, covenants and conventions have been structured in this Organization. Since the Declaration was proclaimed there has been a widespread awareness of human rights which could no longer be ignored by governments, regardless of disparities in their respective political, economic or social systems.

76. It was hoped that the Declaration might pave the way for the attainment of a common moral standard which would preserve the sanity of man and strengthen his will to live. Divested of his fundamental human rights, throughout the ages man was known to rebel against injustice, whether such injustice emanated from inside or outside the State.

77. Notwithstanding the Universal Declaration, civil strife and war are still with us and there is no assurance that another conflict may not push mankind into the abyss of

destruction. Why is this so? It is because those who exercise excessive power or acquire superfluous wealth are frequently too preoccupied with their own achievements and so dazzled by the adulation of the masses that they fail to pay sufficient attention to the fundamental human rights of others. These self-enamoured achievers, as they may be called, have practically no time to redress the ills from which other people suffer. Worse than all this, the powerful, the affluent and the renowned acquire privileges, and whether they do so legitimately or unscrupulously they become luminous models to whoever aspires to copy or emulate them.

78. Is it any wonder that there are so many people who fight for privileges at any cost, rather than content themselves with equal rights? Far be it from any one of us here to decry well-earned merit and distinction. The spirit to succeed in life should not be dampened, lest human progress be hampered to the point of stagnation. Nevertheless, success need not become such a fetish as to be revered at the dire expense of others. Let it be noted that the very successful are usually tense and seldom lead a happy life. Unbridled ambition for power invariably leads to corruption, tyranny and aggression. On the other hand, insatiable hunger for excessive wealth is quite interchangeable with absolute power and its abuses. As for those who attain fame through power and wealth, they will tend to set themselves above others. While these men are called great, they cannot escape death. Such is the fate of man, regardless of whether he acquired privileges or was denied the enjoyment of his inalienable rights. Indeed, such is the fate of man regardless of whether he is a Croesus, a Caesar or an ordinary mortal unknown in the annals of history. Man is like a guest on this earth, an insignificant planet orbiting around the sun, which is a small star in the stupendous universe. When man dies he leaves not even a shadow behind him. He may be likened to a grain of sand on the shore of eternity.

79. Unlike other vertebrates on this earth, instead of regulating his behaviour by the wisdom inherent in his instinct, he prides himself on having harnessed the forces of nature, forgetting that by deviating from his beneficent instincts he becomes worse than the most predatory animal. To correct man's aberrated behaviour there has been no dearth of prophets and wise teachers to guide him on to the right path to happiness during his short span on earth. Religions and codes of ethics have been of no avail. Man has chosen to surrender himself to the demons of power and greed and to sing the praises of his fictitious glory.

80. The Universal Declaration was meant to be a prescription for treating these human ills. Is there any salvation, to rid man of ignominy? Are the leaders of the world impervious to salutary change? The answer lies in how they interpret article 3 of the Universal Declaration, which may be considered the umbrella of all the other fundamental human rights enumerated in it. Article 3 reads: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person." But how can that article be safeguarded, leave aside fully implemented, when penury and destitution are still rampant, when liberty has been eroded, sometimes to vanishing point, and the security of persons is beset with fear of the ruthless? Life has become cheap. People are still wantonly killed like flies. In the name of liberty many crimes are still being committed and in the name of justice many tragedies are brought about.

81. All this is happening while most of the rulers and the governed still pay lip service to human rights. Is there any remedy, or shall we turn to cynicism and give up hope? The trouble with the world is that most of those in authority need to school themselves with restraint instead of being so self-righteous as to imagine themselves sometimes to be the shadow of God on earth. Men wielding power, whether in big or small nations, should be constantly reminded of the old adage that a true leader of a people is its servant. The wealthy should constantly recall that they take nothing with them when they make their exit from this world. Every one of us in fact should be reminded that we belong to a single human family and that whoever hurts his brother ends by hurting himself. The influential among us, whether they be influential by virtue of power, wealth or exalted status, have duties and responsibilities towards all their fellow men.

82. We should also remind ourselves that industrial and technological progress can be applied to the detriment of man and not always necessary to his edification and well-being. And, lest we forget, there can be no real justice unless it is tempered with mercy. We should further remind ourselves that no man is perfect. What the ancients said still obtains: to err is human, to forgive divine.

83. The prerequisite for the enjoyment of fundamental human rights is to learn how to be master over self and how to refrain from lording it over others.

84. We should not confuse liberty with license or permissiveness but should endeavour to preserve the family as the corner-stone of society.

85. In doing all these things we may predict a better and more balanced life for succeeding generations—a life free from tensions and conflicts engendered by human excesses and free from the perversions of our sane instincts.

86. How will the future be affected by the observance of human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration? That question reminds me of the opening lines of a poem I wrote 50 years ago. They read:

“What we shall be we do not exactly know.
 “All that we vaguely feel is that we shall be.
 “The winding streamlets do not know how they flow,
 “But at last they shape their course down to the sea.”

The streamlets stand for human rights. Eventually those streamlets will pour into the sea: the sea of human love. It is then, and only then, that succeeding generations will think of our endeavours as not having been made in vain. It is then, and only then, that true love, peace and concord will prevail on earth.

87. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Baroody for his moving address.

88. I now call on Mr. John Humphrey of Canada, who participated in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

89. Mr. HUMPHREY: I think I should tell the Assembly that for me this is a new experience. I have spent a good part of my life in United Nations meetings of one kind or another, but this is the first time I have ever spoken in this

Assembly other than as a member of the Secretariat. And even now I am not speaking as representative of a Government. Indeed, I have never spoken in the United Nations as a representative of a Government. I am here today as the guest of the Canadian delegation, which I thank most warmly for having given me this opportunity to take part in this important celebration. I consider it a very great privilege indeed.

90. We are celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption by this Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A quarter of a century is a long time in the history of an international organization, and it is a long time in the life of a man. Apart from a few of my former colleagues who are still in the Secretariat, I suppose I am one of the very few people in this room who witnessed the adoption of the Declaration on the night of 10 December 1948.

91. I do not need to remind you of the circumstances. Shocked by the gross violations of human rights that had occurred during and immediately before the Second World War, the nations assembled at San Francisco had decided that one of the principal purposes of the United Nations would be to promote and encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. References to human rights run through the Charter like a golden thread. But although attempts were made at San Francisco to incorporate an international bill of rights in it, nowhere does the Charter list or define those rights and freedoms. That would be the first business of the Commission on Human Rights which the Charter instructed the Economic and Social Council to create.

92. The Commission on Human Rights held its first session in the late winter of 1947, and very soon decided that the international bill of rights would have three parts: a declaration, a multilateral convention to be known as the Covenant, which eventually became two Covenants, and measures of implementation. The Commission worked so well that a little over a year later its draft of the declaration came before the third session of the General Assembly. The Third Committee devoted some 81 long meetings to the instrument, during which it considered 168 amendments. It is a tribute to the work of the Commission that the text finally adopted by the Assembly was remarkably like the one prepared by the Commission.

93. It was in an atmosphere of enthusiastic anticipation that the report of the Third Committee came before the Assembly on the night of 10 December. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted without a dissenting vote, and the event was hailed both within and outside the United Nations as a great achievement. The United Nations, in which men and women all over the world were putting so much hope, had given voice to the deepest aspirations of mankind. And that had happened notwithstanding the sharp ideological differences which divided the membership of the Organization, a membership which reflected all the different social and economic systems which characterize the contemporary world.

94. The Declaration was not meant to be binding on States. For not only was it adopted in the form of a resolution but at the very time of its adoption the Organization

was committed to the preparation of a multilateral treaty which would have no *raison d'être* if the Declaration were itself binding. But whatever its juridical character, it immediately acquired a moral and political authority which was equalled only by the Charter itself. And as the years went by that authority continued to grow. Looking back after a quarter of a century, the achievement now seems greater than the authors of the instrument could have imagined in 1948. For whatever their intentions may have been, this Declaration, which was never meant to be binding, is now probably part of the customary law of nations and therefore binding on all States.

95. If, as the World Court seems recently to have said, Articles 55 and 56 of the Charter bind States to respect and observe human rights and fundamental freedoms, these rights and freedoms, which the Charter does not list or define, are the rights and freedoms listed and defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That, I suggest, is a truly revolutionary development. In traditional international law and practice, human rights fell almost exclusively within the domestic jurisdiction of States. To put it very bluntly, what a State did to its own nationals was its own business and beyond the reach of international law. States, and only States, were subjects of international law. All that has changed. International law, or, as we should now call it, world law, governs the conduct of and protects the rights of other entities, including the United Nations itself, and of individual men and women wherever they may live. That is a development which is as revolutionary as anything that has ever happened in history.

96. The Declaration had no father in the sense that Thomas Jefferson, for example, was the author of the American Declaration of Independence. Many hundreds of people—in the Commission on Human Rights, in the Commission on the Status of Women, in the sub-commissions, in the Economic and Social Council, in the General Assembly, in the specialized agencies, in government departments, in non-governmental organizations and in the Secretariat—many hundreds of people contributed to the drafting. The Declaration is in a very real sense an anonymous document and it owes much of its authority to this very anonymity. It was an almost impersonal reaction to events and a synthesis of the finest aspirations of the human race. Whoever the authors were, there would have been a declaration on human rights.

97. But, although the Declaration is an anonymous document, there are nevertheless two names that must be mentioned on this occasion. The first is that of the late Eleanor Roosevelt, to whose memory the Declaration will always be a monument, a monument much more enduring than the beautiful stone seat in the United Nations gardens. Not only did she lend her great prestige to its work in the years when she was its Chairman, but the Declaration owes much to her driving force and sense of purpose. The second name is that of the late Henri Laugier, who was the Assistant Secretary-General in charge of Social Affairs when the Declaration was being drafted. Laugier was one of the most dynamic and dedicated personalities ever to hold high office in the United Nations Secretariat. He was passionately dedicated to human rights and to the Declaration. If we were fortunate in having Mrs. Roosevelt as the Chairman of the Commission, we were equally fortunate in having Laugier in the Secretariat.

98. We all agree that this is a great occasion. But it is no occasion for complacency. At the very time we are meeting here today, very many people, millions of people, are in a position where their rights are not being respected. Many of these people have never even heard of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its high purposes. Men and women whose rights are being consistently violated will not be impressed by the celebrations that are being held in this hall today. Rather will they be asking whether the Governments whose representatives sit in this Assembly have forgotten the great purposes of the Charter. The United Nations can never guarantee that every human right will be respected in every circumstance. Prior responsibility for ensuring respect for human rights will continue to remain with the various Governments and the men and women for whom they act. But if States do not respect the rights of their nationals, and in particular where there are consistent patterns of gross violations of human rights, the responsibility of the United Nations is engaged; and the United Nations will not be doing its plain duty under the Charter unless it takes steps to make the Universal Declaration of Human Rights a reality. Human rights without implementation do not mean very much. There now exists an important body of world law the purpose of which is to protect the rights of individual men and women, even against their own Governments; and we can congratulate ourselves in the knowledge that the United Nations is responsible chiefly for this historically significant development, either directly or by inspiration. But it is now over a quarter of a century since the San Francisco Conference, and the United Nations has not yet been able to devise effective procedures for the implementation of the rights and freedoms to which it is dedicated and whose respect and observance it is committed to obtain. Whether or not it will be able to do this will be the ultimate test of its ability to make the Charter's finest purpose a reality. Five years from now the United Nations will again be celebrating an anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration. I am young enough to hope that I may have the privilege of being present at that celebration and that I will be able to say in all sincerity that the United Nations has justified the hopes that men and women everywhere continue to place in it.

99. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): We come now to the awarding of the United Nations Human Rights Prizes.

100. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 2217 (XXI) of 19 December 1966, and as I announced to the Assembly at its 2157th meeting, on 26 October 1973, six prizes are to be awarded this year to persons who have made outstanding contributions to the promotion of the human rights and fundamental freedoms embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

101. The six persons whom the Special Committee has selected as winners of the United Nations human rights prizes are Dr. Taha Hussein, Mr. Wilfred Jenks, Miss Maria Lavallo-Urbina, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, and U Thant.

102. Dr. Taha Hussein of Egypt was born in 1889 and to our deep sorrow died unexpectedly on 28 October 1973, two days after he had been selected as a recipient of one of the human rights prizes. Although handicapped by blindness

since the age of three, Dr. Hussein had succeeded in becoming a focal figure of intellectual life in Egypt and in the Arab world, as though his blindness has created within him an internal illumination. In 1930 he was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Letters at the University of Egypt, and in 1942 he became the first Rector of the University of Alexandria. From 1950 to 1952 he was Minister of Public Education. He was also President of the Academy of Arabic Languages and one-time President of the Institute of Egypt. Dr. Hussein was a leading spirit in the policy of free education which the Egyptian Government has applied at all levels of primary, secondary and university education. In addition to novels and essays, Dr. Hussein was the author of an autobiographical work, *The Book of Days*, which was published in 1929 and is considered to be one of the outstanding works of world literature.

103. Mr. Wilfred Jenks of the United Kingdom was born in 1909 and died a short time ago, on 9 October this year, while serving as Director General of the International Labour Organisation [ILO]. Mr. Jenks' career in the ILO spanned over 40 years of the half-century of existence of that organization. His services were invaluable. He entered the service of the ILO in 1931 as a legal officer and was appointed Director General in 1970. Mr. Jenks helped to write the Declaration of Philadelphia in 1944, which became part of the constitution of the ILO. He was widely known and highly respected as an international lawyer. His books on international law include the *Common Law of Mankind*, which in 1959 won the Annual Award of the American Society of International Law for Outstanding Merit.

104. Miss Maria Lavallo-Urbina of Mexico is a lawyer, a professor and a prominent public official. She headed a campaign against illiteracy in her own state of Campeche, and as head of the Social Defence Department of Mexico's Ministry of the Interior from 1954 to 1964 she initiated fundamental penal reforms. As Senator of the Republic from 1964 to 1970, Miss Lavallo-Urbina was instrumental in amending the constitution of Mexico to protect the rights of Mexican mothers. She also initiated solutions to problems raised by juvenile delinquency. She was the first woman to hold the position of President of the Senate of the Republic of Mexico. She represented her country in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women from 1957 to 1968 and was elected Chairman of that Commission in 1963 and Vice-Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights in 1972.

105. Bishop Abel Muzorewa of Southern Rhodesia was born in 1925. After attending different schools and colleges of the United Methodist Church both in Rhodesia and in the United States, Bishop Muzorewa returned to Rhodesia to work as minister of his religion and educator. From 1966 to 1968 he achieved national and international acclaim for his work as a Youth Secretary of the Christian Council of Rhodesia. In 1968 he was elected resident Bishop of Rhodesia by the five conferences which compose the Central African Confederation. In 1971 he was elected President of the African National Council of Rhodesia, a grass-roots level organization of the overwhelming majority of Africans of Zimbabwe culture who are valiantly fighting for their right to self-determination. He is the author of a manifesto for the African National Council written in 1972. I must say how very much I regret that the violation of the right to leave and

enter his country, as enshrined in article 13 of the Declaration of Human Rights, which we are commemorating, prevented him from being here with us today to receive just recompense for his noble work.

106. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam of Mauritius was born in 1900. He began his public service career in 1940 and has been a member of the Parliament of Mauritius since that time. He has been Prime Minister of Mauritius since 1968, when his country became independent. He also holds the post of Minister of Defence and Internal Security and the post of Minister of Information and Broadcasting. He is Chairman of the Board of Directors of *Advance*, a daily newspaper which he founded, and editor of the *Indian Culture Review*. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam was responsible for a great number of legislative acts in the fields of labour, education, health and welfare in Mauritius. He has also been active in promoting the status of women and in ensuring the protection of labour leaders.

107. Lastly, I must refer to U Thant, one of the noblest and most effective men who have ever served the Organization. He was born in 1909, and prior to his diplomatic career, he had been engaged in education and information work and free-lance journalism. In 1961, when he became Acting Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant was the Permanent Representative of Burma, a post he had held since 1957. I am proud to have cast my vote, as representative of Ecuador in the Security Council, for his election as Secretary-General. He was an admirable Secretary-General between 1962 and 1971. His writings and speeches during that period reflect his deep commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights. His opening statement at the 1968 International Conference on Human Rights, held in Teheran on the occasion of the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration, served as an inspiration to the Conference and to the international community for subsequent action in the field of human rights. In 1973, he was elected President of the World Federation of United Nations Associations.

108. We are fortunate to have with us Mrs. Wilfred Jenks. The family of the late Professor Taha Hussein has designated the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations, His Excellency Dr. Ahmed Esmat Abdel Meguid, to whom Professor Taha Hussein's award is to be presented.

109. U Thant has requested me to express his sincere regrets. Due to ill health—but fortunately it is only a slight illness—the prize awarded to him will be received on his behalf by Mr. Bradford Morse, Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs, in charge of the Division of Human Rights.

110. May I now invite the Secretary-General to join me in awarding the prizes. May I invite the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs to proceed with the Secretary-General on my behalf.

The Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs stepped down from the podium and awarded the prizes.

111. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): The award which could not be presented will be kept until such

time as justice is done to Bishop Muzorewa and he can come here to receive it or designate the person who is to receive it on his behalf.

112. Professor Maria Lavallo-Urbina has indicated that she would be pleased to address the General Assembly and express her gratitude. I invite her to the rostrum.

113. Professor Maria LAVALLE-URBINA (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is with the greatest deference that I turn to the President of the General Assembly and to the Secretary-General, as eminent leaders in international relations, in order to express to them my most heartfelt appreciation for the great distinction with which I have been honoured and to request them, likewise, to be so good as to transmit my gratitude to all those persons who, as a group or individually, participated in the award of prizes. To all of them, my most heartfelt thanks.

114. I also wish to place on record, the pleasure, satisfaction and active encouragement which I find in being associated with such remarkable personalities as those who have been selected to receive these awards. Their deeds, within the difficult simplicity of daily life, makes them select beings who have devoted their entire lives to the noble and pure cause of serving others. That is their start, that their goal.

115. I would not wish to mention my deep feeling, nor disguise my simple pride, without any trace of vanity at this event, because, as I see it, the fruits of my modest endeavours are the flowering and example of historical events in my homeland. Indeed, Mexico is a country which, throughout its dramatic and tormented history, has unremittingly fought for freedom and for social justice. Therefore, our characteristics have their roots in these antecedents and from them derive the doctrine of progress with social justice, which is now practised. Thus, it is the history of my country and a characteristic of Mexicans which, I repeat, have provided it with a propitious ideological outlook, and a proper framework and a fertile soil for the blossoming of the most promising seeds.

116. Furthermore there is a definite concatenation between the internal policy of Mexico and its international policy. A proof of this interrelationship between the internal and external fields is to be found in its contributions such as the Treaty of Tlatelolco for the prohibition of nuclear weapons in Latin America and the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States which President Echeverria submitted for world consideration as a measure of international social justice.

117. On a day like today, on 10 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations approved and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On that day the massive gates of universal history were opened with pomp and majesty to give substance and expression to one of the most transcendental and significant documents in the contemporary history of international relations.

118. In the course of 25 years of endeavour to make human beings noble and dignified, we find among other positive signs, the inclusion of the essence of this endeavour in the internal legislation of various States, in particular in the newly independent States, and frequently at the highest

constitutional level. Because change is the essence of life, every era, every problem, every situation calls for new adjustments and so we live in perpetual change.

119. Personally I wish to proclaim my faith in the United Nations, and specifically, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to add that this is not a romantic or utopian point of view, it is a realistic attitude assumed in the full awareness of the achievements and also of the great limitations from which it suffers.

120. With the serenity which a distance of a quarter of a century lends my perspective, I should like to pay a warm tribute to those who created the Declaration decades ago and to those who uphold it today. For the future, I hope that the promise will be honoured in the observance by men and means as required: clear minds which will respond to the challenge of fighting for human rights and leading people into new ways; bold approaches either proven in effectiveness or as yet untried, or rejected before out of conformity or fear.

121. I believe it is interesting to emphasize that the Special Committee that decided on the awards wisely combined far-reaching areas of discrimination with regard to human rights with the outstanding qualities already evinced in daily events by my esteemed co-recipients.

122. As I see it, this event acquires a concrete dimension of greatness and encouragement where women are concerned. A woman lives in a perpetual struggle for her rights to non-discrimination because of sex, as enshrined in the Charter, and furthermore she espouses the noblest causes of her community with a manifest and enthusiastic desire to serve. I venture to proffer this praise because, in my case, I personally consider and proclaim myself to be the modest channel of communicating to women everywhere who work, who study, who create, that we do receive recognition and encouragement from international organizations. Women throughout the world, even in the most lonely and hostile outposts, live and work with extraordinary dedication for human rights either in groups or individually. At times, perhaps without a clearly stated purpose, but effectively, and what is even more moving, simply in all humility. They work in a glorious range of remarkable or modest services and daily prove that greatness is not measured by volume or brilliance of work alone but by its inspiration, the faith which illumines it and the reiterated and unbroken will to carry it through.

123. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): His Excellency, Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam, has also stated that he will do us the honour of addressing the General Assembly and I invite him to speak.

124. Sir Seewoosagar RAMGOOLAM: It is with a great sense of humility that I express to the United Nations my heartfelt appreciation for the distinct honour it has bestowed upon me, and also my country, by awarding me a Human Rights Prize on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

125. We were not participants at that historic night of 10 December 1948, at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed as

a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping the Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for the rights and freedoms set forth therein and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of Territories under their jurisdiction.

126. In 1948 Mauritius was a Territory under the jurisdiction of a Member State, and it has only been some six years since we have been independent, which has hardly given us time to fulfil all the goals of the Universal Declaration, although the latter is firmly entrenched in our Constitution. For us the date and place of the adoption of the Universal Declaration will always have, however, a special meaning and a sense of joy, because of our close connexion with France where the Declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen was adopted by the French National Assembly in Paris in 1789.

127. Mr. President, in your announcement to the General Assembly, at its 2157th meeting on 26 October, concerning the prizes for human rights, you most kindly referred to me as having done "exceptionally valuable work in the protection and defence of an exemplary multiracial society...". [2157th meeting, para. 3.] You will therefore permit me to say a few words about my own country and its peoples.

128. We are an island in the Indian Ocean discovered originally by Malays and Arabs, and rediscovered in the sixteenth century by the Portuguese, held later by the Dutch, who named it Mauritius, and then by the French who named it Ile de France, until Great Britain came in 1814 by the Treaty of Paris and named it again Mauritius.

129. Mauritius is a most densely populated country, and 95 per cent of the land under cultivation is devoted to sugar, which represents 91 per cent of the value of our total exports. Because of our dependence on sugar agreements and our lack of natural resources, we face problems common to many developing countries; but, while we may have a comparatively contented labour force, we are fortunate in having an almost entirely literate population, blessed with a high quality of adaptability. We are diversifying our economy and establishing light industries in order not to be wholly dependent on sugar, although for many years to come, the latter will continue to be the backbone of our economy.

130. In this multiracial country it would be untrue for me to say that at times there is no racial tension. But we are, if I may say so, a remarkable model of a working multiracial and multicomunal State, where descendants of Indians, Pakistanis, Europeans, Africans and Chinese, professing all the religions in the world, co-operate and enrich our every day life and maintain a working democracy. There is a wide choice of political parties and the electorate takes a deep interest in politics. I can say that we have had years of considerable social and economic progress as well as a growing spirit of harmony and identity of purpose among our people. We have drunk deeply of our cultural heritage and we are basically a peace-loving, non-violent people.

131. We are a member of the Organization of African Unity and of the Commonwealth, among other organizations, and our policy in the United Nations is aimed at achieving the maximum benefit for mankind in the greatest harmony and friendship. We purposely became a party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, because we are resolved, in the words of the Convention, to adopt all necessary measures for speedily eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms and manifestations and to prevent and combat racist doctrines and practices in order to promote understanding between races and to build an international community free from all forms of racial segregation and racial discrimination. Accordingly, the United Nations can expect from us the fullest co-operation in pursuing the goals laid down for the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, which is being launched today.

132. I should like to emphasize that, although we have so far avoided the worst horrors of a nuclear holocaust, we cannot afford to be complacent about future peace and progress. We must fully comprehend the stresses of the modern world. We must not believe that scientific and technological advances, as well as instant communication, have made Governments and people give up all hope of comprehending the complexities of our society and becoming incapable of making any attempt to right its wrongs.

133. As a newly independent country, we are dedicated to the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples adopted by the General Assembly in 1960, which declares in one of its articles, that "all States shall observe faithfully and strictly the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...". We cannot tolerate, and we must eradicate for ever, policies and programmes of segregation, *apartheid* and racial discrimination. We are equally opposed to the so-called real world of *apartheid* between the "have" and the "have-not" countries. We are against the erection of barriers to keep out the realities of hunger and suffering that threaten life and lead to disintegration of human aspirations and values. As article 22 of the Universal Declaration states,

"Everyone, as a member of society... is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation... of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality."

134. If we are to face, with any hope of success, the bewildering and seemingly insoluble problems of our times, we must steadfastly adhere to the decisions and instruments of the United Nations and its family of organizations, and above all, to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose purpose it is to uphold the dignity and worth of the human person and his welfare, based on liberty and justice for all.

135. Mr. President, allow me once again to express my profound gratitude to the United Nations for the award it has given to me and to my country, and to conclude by reiterating on this twenty-fifth anniversary of the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights our unswerving support for the achievement of its objectives.

136. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Dr. Ahmed Esmat Abdel Meguid on behalf of the family of Professor Taha Hussein.

137. Dr. Ahmed Esmat Abdel MEGUID: It is a great honour and privilege for me to receive, on behalf of Mrs. Taha Hussein, the human rights prize which has been awarded by the United Nations to the late Dr. Taha Hussein.

138. Dr. Taha Hussein, an eminent humanist, dean of Arabic literature, educator and philosopher, was always guided in his works and activities by the high ideals and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

139. I sincerely hope that the awarding of Human Rights Prizes to persons who have made outstanding contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms will continue, not only as a significant landmark in our observance of the anniversaries of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but, and more important, to encourage and intensify the efforts of humanity to eradicate racism, *apartheid*, colonialism, foreign occupation and alien subjugation, and to enable men everywhere to enjoy the rule of law, freedom, justice, prosperity and peace.

140. Mrs. Taha Hussein wanted keenly and sincerely to attend this august ceremony, but, regretfully, due to personal circumstances, she could not do so. Mrs. Taha Hussein requested me to convey to you, Mr. President, her personal gratitude and deep appreciation, as well as that of

her family, for the honour that you have conferred upon her husband, the late Dr. Taha Hussein. She requested me also to convey her congratulations and best wishes to Mrs. Wilfred Jenks and her family, Mrs. Maria Lavalle-Urbina, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, and to U Thant and Bishop Abel Muzorewa, who were prevented from being with us today but are present in our minds and hearts.

141. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on Mr. Bradford Morse, who received the prize on behalf of His Excellency U Thant.

142. Mr. MORSE (Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs): It is with a profound sense of humility and respect that I have accepted the Human Rights Prize on behalf of U Thant. His words and his works serve both as a continuing and stirring reminder of the great historical moment we celebrate this day and as an inspiration to the world to achieve more fully the high aims of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As a world leader U Thant brings to all of us a heightened sense of the value of human life, the value of human rights the value of human dignity. His award is highly merited and richly deserved. On behalf of that great and humble man, I convey to you his sincere appreciation.

143. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before adjourning the meeting, I should like to express my congratulations to the recipients of the awards today and my appreciation to all those who have honoured us with their statements.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.