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President: Mr. Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA
(Algeria).

***Tribute to the memory of U Thant,
 third Secretary-General of the United Nations***

1. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I declare open the 2304th plenary meeting of the General Assembly, which has been convened in solemn tribute to the memory of U Thant, third Secretary-General of the United Nations.

2. In deciding to pay tribute to the memory of U Thant today, the General Assembly wishes to demonstrate its admiration and recognition of one who for 10 years so humbly but with such dignity personified the United Nations.

3. In discharging the heavy responsibility he so long assumed at the cost of his health and in such difficult conditions, he at once incarnated the hopes of peoples for a juster world and the disappointments of those who blamed the weakness of our institutions for the persistence of conflicts, tensions and misunderstandings that continued to threaten peace on our planet.

4. U Thant fulfilled his two mandates as Secretary-General of the United Nations at a time when our Organization, still troubled by the problems inherited from the Second World War and dominated by great-Power rivalries, was beginning to open itself up to young, formerly subjugated nations, which came one by one to join the United Nations as they achieved their independence. In the international arena, that period was a significant one for those countries which were beginning to be known as the third world, and whose gradually growing and increasingly active participation gave a new direction to international developments.

5. The appearance of that factor forced the United Nations rapidly to adapt its methods and structure, as well as to readjust its order of priorities and concerns. Who was better qualified than U Thant to preside over such a transformation without breaking with the past, and to keep a clear vision of the future without frustrating the great Powers or driving the small ones to despair? The metamorphosis through which the Organization went at that time resulted from a gradual but certain evolution the full scope or depth of which, since it took place smoothly, were not

always perceived. Undoubtedly U Thant contributed to that peaceful transition from one world to another, a world in which the international community was enriched and enlarged by all the newly independent States that were contributing their youth and their enthusiasm to the Organization, bringing with them also their demands and their impatience.

6. Since he was of the third world, U Thant felt at one with the profound aspirations of our peoples. He was best qualified to understand and appreciate the importance and scope of those aspirations. His active participation in the struggle for the liberation of the Burmese people and in the various Afro-Asian solidarity movements gave him a direct perception of the main trends in Africa and Asia, which were going to change the political map of our world.

7. I feel in duty bound to stress particularly the important role played by U Thant at the time when the Algerian people was engaged in its struggle for liberation and when he represented Burma in the United Nations. Designated by the Afro-Asian group as Chairman of its Special Committee on Algeria for a period of four years, from 1957 until 1961, he demonstrated his constant and untiring interest in the progress of the Algerian struggle and was ceaselessly active in promoting understanding of the Algerian problem, mainly within the United Nations, and the search for a solution that would satisfy the Algerian people's claims to nationhood. As Secretary-General he welcomed the new Algerian Republic, which became a Member of the United Nations in October 1962. Friendships made at such times cannot be forgotten, and the Algerian people will always faithfully and affectionately remember U Thant with recognition and gratitude.

8. I do not want here to trace the entire life of U Thant and his continual wise activity to bring peace to the world and a better understanding among peoples. In the very midst of the contradictions of our world, subject to differing pressures and to incompatible demands, he was able, even in the gravest moments of crisis, to preserve that humanity which always characterized his attitude, without which our Organization's mission would have lost its full meaning.

9. In U Thant the international community has lost a great man. His devotion to the cause of mankind will remain for one and all an example and an encouragement. In the torn and bitter world that is ours we may be inspired by his words, full of wisdom and simplicity, which summarize the philosophy of his actions. He said "We are thrown together on this same planet and we have to learn to live together" whatever the differences in our size, colour, religious beliefs or political ideologies.¹

10. The humility associated with the humble, with whom he always identified himself, was part and

parcel of his natural nobility. He knew he was a man of the third world and derived neither pride nor frustration from that condition which, because it was that of the greater part, he strove to assimilate to that of all mankind. In the eyes of future generations he will remain the living witness of a difficult time in which, nevertheless, some men, in the most adverse of circumstances and struggling to the bitter end, laid claim, as he did, to their privilege to govern themselves.

11. History has already recorded U Thant's name as one of those exceptional men who, through what has come to be known as destiny, whether tragic or triumphant, always impose balance and harmony as, if not foreordained, at least an overwhelming imperative. His work reflected his personality, sober and discreet, yet effective. His achievement was simply remarkable because he was outstanding in his devotion to great causes, and even today we have the impression that he was concerned only with the major topics of contemporary history. It is not easy to sum up in a few words a public figure who seems to have been always familiar, even if one never had the good fortune to meet him. He had a wide range of talent, and was by nature destined for greatness and for a fate above the ordinary. He showed his greatness by refusing honours eagerly sought by others, and was exceptional in that, while the dead rarely keep their friends, U Thant left only friends to mourn him. May he rest in peace in the living memory of our friendship and affection.

12. I now call on Mr. Kurt Waldheim, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

13. The SECRETARY-GENERAL: U Thant served the United Nations devotedly for 10 years as its third Secretary-General. He gave himself unreservedly to the Organization and was sustained, when the burdens of the office inevitably began to take their physical toll, by his dedication, by his deep inner faith and spiritual discipline, and by his determination to do his duty.

14. It is no secret that when he left the service of the Organization at the end of 1971, U Thant was physically exhausted and ill. To the joy of all his friends, he regained his health and vigour and devoted himself to writing his memoirs. Then, tragically, he was stricken again. This time, his will and his unshakeable optimism were not enough. He died on 25 November.

15. U Thant became Acting Secretary-General of the United Nations on 3 November 1961, to complete the unexpired term of Dag Hammarskjöld, who had died in an air crash six weeks earlier. He assumed office at a time when the Organization was going through a period of deep and unprecedented crisis related especially to the developments in what was then the Congo and is now Zaire. The Office of the Secretary-General was at the heart of this crisis, which had produced very serious divisions and differences of opinion among the Member States.

16. It was U Thant's first duty to try to bridge these divisions and differences, to restore calm and harmony to the overheated atmosphere of controversy which had prevailed during the previous year, and to set the United Nations on a course that would maintain its relevance and usefulness in the new conditions of the

1960s. In a turbulent period of change this was a tremendous challenge.

17. The developments in the Congo were a major preoccupation for two more years. In the fall of 1962, the Cuban missile crisis presented the most dangerous potential confrontation of nuclear Powers that had ever occurred. U Thant played a crucial role in the resolution of this most dangerous of crises. Early in 1964, the United Nations became involved in keeping the peace in Cyprus—then, as now, an island torn by violence and discord. In 1965, when full-scale war erupted between India and Pakistan, U Thant went to the subcontinent to negotiate a cease-fire. At about the same time also, the tragedy of Viet Nam, in which the United Nations was never directly involved, began to assume its historical momentum. U Thant made a long personal effort to help in ending the Vietnamese tragedy. In 1967, there was renewed war in the Middle East. In early 1971, the war clouds gathered again in the South Asian subcontinent and the situation dominated U Thant's last months as Secretary-General.

18. In all of these events, the quiet but resolute personality of U Thant was an important factor. He was so unassuming, so outwardly calm and so lacking in the desire for instant public recognition that his effectiveness in times of crisis has tended to be minimized or forgotten. He was never afraid to speak his mind on difficult issues, and to pursue, without fear or favour, the course he believed to be right. That the community of nations not only accepted this but unanimously voted for him to continue in office is the highest tribute to his integrity and character.

19. No one will ever know the intense internal struggle which U Thant's discipline and his deep faith concealed from the public gaze. He was occasionally even reproached for his calm. His medical history, which he concealed as far as possible, tells another story—the story of a good and disciplined man doing his best to perform one of the most difficult jobs in the world, and privately enduring the extremes of fatigue, worry and frustration.

20. U Thant never allowed himself to complain about the difficulties of his job. But at the end of his 10 years, speaking to the United Nations Correspondents' Association in September 1971, he did allow himself to comment on them. I shall quote just two passages which describe his approach to the formidable problems and frustrations of the Secretary-Generalship:

“No Secretary-General can afford to lose a sense of obligation to the human community in its broadest sense—an obligation to give his utmost to make the principles and aims of the Charter a reality and to do whatever he can to improve the general condition of the community of nations.

“The other quality which a Secretary-General can never afford to lose is an urgent sense of political realism.”²

21. In the same speech he described his concept of his job as follows:

“There is no easy way to discharge the duties of the Secretary-Generalship, but that does not detract from the immense privilege of being allowed

to attempt the job. In my view, it is the most varied, most interesting and most challenging political job on earth. In one way, the Secretary-General is fortunate, for he is allowed to consider the problems of peace and war, the problems of the present and the future of mankind, from a position which is, and must be by its very nature, independent of national considerations. Impartiality, principle, and objective truth are his strongest weapons. He is, and must be, at the same time a realist and a man of idealism and hope, with his mind more concentrated on a better future than preoccupied with a baneful past."

22. Like anyone else who occupies a leading position in public life, U Thant's reputation and public standing went through a series of fluctuations. It will be a long time before the full record is revealed and a thorough evaluation of his achievements can be made.

23. Apart from the overwhelming pressures of the political side of his job, U Thant was passionately interested in the work of our Organization in economic and social development and in humanitarian matters. During his Secretary-Generalship, this side of the United Nations developed on a scale and in new directions far beyond the expectations of the founding fathers. U Thant was an untiring supporter of this development, and never ceased to warn the international community of the dangers of a failure to co-operate urgently on global economic and social problems. His warnings are even more relevant to the situation in which we find ourselves today.

24. U Thant was, above all, a humane man with a passionate respect for human dignity and for the value of the individual in an increasingly complicated and crowded world. His integrity and his courage were rooted in his firm Buddhist faith and in an unshakeable belief in humanity and in the necessity of improving the quality of lives of all mankind. We remember him for his achievements and for the difficulties he faced in presiding over our Organization for 10 tumultuous years. We also remember him as a man of wisdom, integrity and courage who gave himself unstintingly to the service of the United Nations in the cause of peace, justice and progress in the world.

25. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I now call on Mr. Carlos Romulo, President of the fourth session of the General Assembly.

26. Mr. ROMULO (Philippines), President of the fourth session of the General Assembly: I have come to pay tribute to U Thant in several capacities.

27. First, I speak as Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, representing a country that has assiduously maintained the friendliest relations with U Thant's native land, Burma, and a people that has the highest regard for the first Asian Secretary-General of the United Nations.

28. Secondly, I speak as a former President of the General Assembly in which U Thant represented his country with distinction before he became, as Secretary-General, the United Nations' equally distinguished and devoted servant.

29. Thirdly, I speak as signatory for the Philippines of the United Nations Charter in San Francisco, to the implementation of which U Thant devoted the best years of his life.

30. I also have the great honour, on this solemn occasion, to speak on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, consisting of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, and composed of 250 million people.

31. Indeed, U Thant is Asia's gift to the world. U Thant's unprecedented tenure of one whole decade as Secretary-General included years of crisis for the United Nations, when the Organization nearly went bankrupt and the super-Powers embarked on a collision course over Cuba, from which they were with difficulty diverted with the help of U Thant's good offices.

32. They were years of glory, as well, with 29 new States emerging into the light of independence and taking their rightful places in the stately march towards the United Nations goal of universality of membership. The restoration of the lawful rights of a great and ancient State, China, marked a highlight in this historic process. It occurred during the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly, in 1971; it was a crowning point attained on the eve of U Thant's retirement from his high office.

33. Viewed from another angle, U Thant's term also embraced creative years, during which international co-operation for development was greatly expanded and notable initiatives were taken in important new fields of United Nations concern, such as population planning, the enhancement of the human environment, and a new Law of the Sea. Together with the beginnings of *détente* between the super-Powers, a stronger sense of interdependence manifested itself in the form of a more purposeful and concerted search for global solutions to global problems.

34. In May 1969, U Thant had solemnly warned the Members of the United Nations that they had perhaps 10 years left in which to subordinate their ancient quarrels and launch a global partnership to solve global problems, which would otherwise reach such staggering proportions as to be beyond their capacity to control. Spurred by his earnest appeal, they appeared to be making a serious effort to avoid the fulfilment of his apocalyptic message.

35. Last Monday, 25 November, barely three years after laying down the heavy burden of "the most impossible job in the world", U Thant, the consummate conciliator, the patient, tireless architect of peace, the peerless practitioner of quiet diplomacy, passed away as unobtrusively as he had lived. It is most fitting that he should be honoured by the United Nations which he served so faithfully and so well.

36. His sterling record as Secretary-General is, of course, his own best monument. In so far as it was in any one man's power, he kept the United Nations intact and functioning at a time when there was a very real danger of its collapse. The incalculable value of that achievement may be gauged by envisaging what the state of the world would be today without the United Nations.

37. U Thant will be remembered for other things. He was a good man, and he left the world a better place than he had found it. That alone is an epitaph which few deserve but of which many would be proud.

38. He was modest to a fault. When he made an official visit to my country, the Philippines, he was

invited to address a joint session of the Philippines Congress. He was reluctant to accept the invitation, saying that he was unworthy of such a signal honour. When I appealed to him, in behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, to continue as Secretary-General for another term, he said—modestly but sincerely—that it was time for him to give way to a worthy successor. Humility became him because it was innate, genuine, and unimpeachable.

39. He could be blunt on occasion, when aroused to righteous indignation. At a press conference in Finland in the summer of 1952, he described Moise Tshombe and his cohorts in the Congo as “a bunch of clowns” who did not deserve serious attention. An associate, fearing that U Thant might be misunderstood and criticized for that remark, later suggested that he qualify it or say that he was misquoted. U Thant adamantly refused. His sense of uncompromising honesty and integrity would not permit him to disown what he thought was right.

40. A thinker and a scholar, U Thant started his career as a teacher in a small community in Burma. By a symbolic coincidence, his pet project, the United Nations University, is now on the point of becoming operational, just when he has died. This unique university will propagate the principles for which U Thant lived and died. The ideals which he exemplified as Secretary-General will be taught to the whole world.

41. U Thant's spirit will find in this United Nations University, of which he was the founding father, a fitting reincarnation, with his apostleship of peace, progress and justice carried on in a new dimension by today's youth, who will shape the world of tomorrow.

42. Such is U Thant's legacy—his last legacy—and with it he has bequeathed to us confidence in the present and hope for the future.

43. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I now call on Mrs. Angie Brooks-Randolph, President of the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

44. Mrs. BROOKS-RANDOLPH (Liberia), President of the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly: We are gathered here today to pay a tribute to the memory of one of the greatest men of our time. In doing so, I must express my very deep sorrow at the death of U Thant—our friend, colleague and brother, the Burmese scholar and former Permanent Representative of Burma to the United Nations, as well as Secretary-General of the United Nations.

45. Already many words of appreciation of his work and personal qualities have been spoken from this rostrum; but his great concern and the efforts he made in his lifetime for the well-being of the human family leave still more to be said.

46. U Thant was a champion of peace and international understanding, a champion of the weak and poor peoples of the earth. At the same time, he treated everyone with courtesy and respect.

47. In his capacity as Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant exhibited the spirit of a fearless fighter for justice. You will agree that in most cases his thinking on the issues and problems that beset the United Nations was solid and his vision

sound, and his statements went to the core of the problems to be tackled.

48. His pronouncements as Secretary-General of the United Nations for a decade are indelible. Of the United Nations itself he stated:

“The United Nations can be only what its Member countries choose to make it. . . . In the discharge of its political functions, it is weak and inadequate but it is still the best hope for getting out of our intolerably dangerous thermonuclear jungle and for creating the beginning of a civilized international community.”¹

I should like to add that the United Nations is the only international machinery for building peace.

49. Nor can I forget U Thant's very strong concept of human rights. He said:

“In . . . a very real sense, the promotion and protection of human rights form the very essence and provide the deepest meaning and motivation of the United Nations as an international and inter-governmental Organization. For, in the last analysis, a recognition of the dignity and worth of the human person, in the words of the Charter, is a symbol of all the other activities and purposes entrusted to and pursued by the world Organization: peace, the security of future generations from the scourge of war, and the promotion of social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. The establishment of human rights provides the foundation upon which rests the political structure of human freedom; the achievement of human freedom generates social progress; the attainment of economic freedom generates the will as well as the capacity for economic and social progress; the attainment of economic and social progress provides the basis for true peace.”

I have yet to hear a more meaningful interpretation of the provisions of the Charter as it relates to human rights than that given by U Thant.

50. I am reminded also of U Thant's deep interest in what he termed the three dimensions, or the three Ds—disarmament, decolonization and development—as he spoke of the Second United Nations Development Decade. As to development, his concern was that two thirds of the world's peoples live in countries classed as underdeveloped, where preventable disease kills hundreds of thousands each year and cripples hundreds of millions; where famine stalks just around the corner and reaches out to claim thousands of lives; where floods and drought tip the balance; where resources lie unused beneath the earth for want of the skills or the funds to exploit them.

51. He and I agreed that the answer to this dilemma is development: the use of existing but under-utilized brain-power, muscle-power, soil, minerals, capital institutions and every other building-block of a modern economy. Therefore, said he, it is up to the United Nations to aid the process by helping the developing countries to organize their own efforts, and by channelling outside assistance in ways which will most benefit needy countries.

52. Or perhaps I should ask, who can forget U Thant's interest in the youth of our world? It was his belief that in our venture for peace their voices should be

heard. It was in his tenure of office that the First Youth Assembly was held in 1970 here at United Nations Headquarters, where they addressed the world from this very rostrum and voiced their sentiments on the burning issues at that time. It was also his concept that a United Nations University be established. It can be said of U Thant that he has left behind him footprints on the sands of time.

53. I have taken this opportunity to refresh your memory of some of U Thant's thoughts and actions, for they are as true today as when he pronounced them. They are inescapable.

54. The tenure of U Thant as Secretary-General of the United Nations is not to be viewed as one that was easy, for this servant of peace took office at a time when there was a big division between the great Powers. Hence he did not enjoy the co-operation existing between the great Powers at the establishment of the United Nations, as did prior Secretaries-General. There was a division as to the efficacy of the United Nations. However, he was very skilful in resolving some of the challenges that threatened the very existence of the United Nations.

55. Some of us present can recall the situation regarding the payment of contributions and the effect it had on the United Nations. The role of the Secretary-General itself seemed to have been in question, but skilfully and tactfully Secretary-General U Thant carried out his duties. We can never forget the role he played with respect to moulding the peace-force operations. While the question of peace-keeping is still unresolved, he skilfully, too, kept the United Nations afloat while working to bring harmony between the great Powers.

56. After U Thant's tenure as Secretary-General, he continued his effort for peace. Not only was he writing an account of his experience in international relations, he was also involved in several programmes designed to promote support for the cause of peace.

57. In my dealings with him, particularly as President of the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly, I came to realize that U Thant was a religious man, that he believed a great deal in meditation; and it was the same kind of devotion which was exhibited in the way he pursued the basic goals of the United Nations.

58. For me, it was an honour and a pleasure to be associated with U Thant. I came to respect him for his sincerity, devotion, and integrity. He is dead, but his life goes on as long as there is a task to perform in the promotion of human relationships, be it between nations or individuals. As representatives we can rededicate ourselves to the ideals and objectives he fostered for peace, understanding and well-being for all mankind.

59. To Mrs. Thant and the other members of the bereaved family: your loved one has passed into the beyond, from whence no traveller returns, but please be consoled by the great contribution that he has made for all of mankind, in which thought the Government and people of Liberia and the delegation here at the United Nations join me.

60. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I now call on Mr. Leopoldo Benites, President of the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

61. Mr. BENITES (Ecuador), President of the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly (*interpretation from Spanish*): In the most beautiful elegy written in the Castilian language, the Spanish poet Jorge Manrique said that our lives are like rivers winding their way to the sea, which is death.

62. If our lives are like rivers flowing towards death, it is important to realize what fertile sediment they leave along the banks, what thirsty fields their clear waters nourish along the way, what seeds of life may blossom, and what beauty of forest, sky and cloud are mirrored in them during their passage on the earth.

63. In the last days of U Thant and after his death, I have given much thought to the legacy he bequeathed us in his journey through life. After many years of warm friendship and great understanding, I would say that the main feature of U Thant's character was serenity as the expression of a certain attitude towards mankind and the world, which, to a Buddhist like himself, were not two separate notions but a single profound one in God.

64. I made U Thant's acquaintance at a time of great anguish, in 1961, when the foundations of our Organization seemed to be crumbling. At the time I had the honour of representing Ecuador in the Security Council, and in that capacity I saw Dag Hammarskjöld off on the journey from which he was never to return. And it fell to me to vote, on behalf of my country, in the election of the Burmese school teacher, U Thant, at that time little known. He emerged as a compromise solution to the division among the major Powers on whether the post of Secretary-General should be held by one person, or more than one. U Thant was accepted as a compromise candidate in a provisional election, but his tenure as Secretary-General of the United Nations was to last 10 years. He was confirmed in 1962 and re-elected in 1966.

65. The time of his election could not have been more difficult or dramatic. A night of pain and death hung heavy over the Congo. The tension of the cold war dominated the United Nations and all Dag Hammarskjöld's peace-making efforts were submerged in the mystery of his death.

66. In the exercise of his functions Dag Hammarskjöld had been a shining example of the most refined Western culture. He combined his almost messianic conception of his mission of peace on earth with an autocratic interpretation of the limited rights that the Charter accords to the Secretary-General. He was a mystic in his mission of peace, perhaps simply because he was a mystic who read St. John of the Cross, who enjoyed translating the philosophy of Martin Buber; and was a connoisseur of abstract art because he revelled in form, colour and perhaps a certain artistic distillation of space and time.

67. U Thant, however, was the purest expression of the universality of the Eastern spirit blended with Western culture. For that reason he was able not only to think with precision but to meditate deeply. Thinking is a logical exercise to establish order. Meditating may be a mystical operation, it may be introspective, meaning that one may be self-absorbed, or it may be outward-looking and attempt to unite man and the world, to see man as a part of the world. U Thant, a

Buddhist, knew that meditation was a striving for perfection through catharsis and through self-realization. Thus it was that he devoted at least 15 minutes every day to meditation. That explains the main feature of his personality to which I have already referred: his creative serenity, his total devotion to peace and his boundless kindness, which led him to deal equally with the great and with the small without a shadow of bureaucratic authoritarianism.

68. Whenever I spoke with him or heard him from the rostrum I always thought that what gave his political action a personal stamp was that he did not try to lay down rules or to dictate. He had the humble but highly positive conviction that he was a servant of the Organization and that his duties were determined by the lofty ethical standards enshrined in the Preamble to and the purposes and principles of the Charter. That attitude at once humble and courageous, serene and energetic, buttressed his ability to maintain his calm and alertness in the midst of the many tempests that threatened the very existence of man on earth.

69. The decade of U Thant—1961 to 1971—was fraught with dire threats. The violent situation in the Congo was gradually replaced by peaceful development, which has yielded extraordinary fruit in the great country that is today Zaire. The cold war, which at the beginning of the decade was almost brutal, had moved towards the uncertain paths of *détente* by the time he retired. The year 1962 saw the crisis in the Caribbean which brought the world to the brink of a nuclear holocaust. And in the same year, nuclear tests in the atmosphere reached a terrifying level, which made it necessary to conclude the test-ban Treaty of 1963 and, subsequently, the non-proliferation Treaty. The religious conflict that began in Viet Nam around 1963 became an armed conflict, which U Thant condemned as early as 1965 and which he condemned again in 1968 at the time of the escalation of the bombing in the north. And also with great courage in defence of his principles, he had to cope with the dramatic problem of the Middle East in 1967 when he carried out patient efforts which were still unsuccessful at the time of his retirement; in a situation that even today remains tense.

70. Such was the beleaguered world U Thant confronted with serene constancy and persuasive diplomacy. And I would remind you, finally, that U Thant's decade was the decade of decolonization, which began in September 1960 with the admission of 16 African States and was confirmed in December of the same year in resolution 1514 (XV). U Thant perceived very clearly that the two worlds, which up to then had been at odds—that is to say, the two worlds of east and west, divided longitudinally—were now being divided in a different way, latitudinally, between the extreme affluence of the north and the desperate poverty of the south.

71. To think with clarity and to meditate deeply; to devote the fullness of one's being to the achievement of peace and the love of mankind; to bestow kindness and to work with serene humility but valiant perseverance: that is the example U Thant bequeathed to us in his journey on earth.

72. It may well be that for U Thant, a Buddhist, the world was a painful illusion, as Prince Siddhartha Gautama discovered under the fig tree before he be-

came the Buddha, and that a life of goodness, peace and justice led him to ultimate deliverance. As a friend who loved and understood him I pray that, consistent with his beliefs, the river of his life, when it reaches the sea, will flow into an immense and boundless ocean. But what he left on earth in terms of a wealth of kindness and understanding, of the struggle for peace and justice undertaken from his high position as Secretary-General, are unassailable achievements, which will be recognized by a grateful mankind.

73. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I now call on Mr. Téléphone Yaguibou, the representative of the Upper Volta, on behalf of the group of African States.

74. Mr. YAGUIBOU (Upper Volta) (*interpretation from French*): Shed not too many tears, for in death he has found rest. It is thus with the serenity and the dignity taught us by the Scriptures that we children of Africa wish, in this hushed atmosphere, to make our voice heard at this time of mourning which has suddenly afflicted our Organization.

75. There are times when words do not adequately reflect the depths of our feelings. Need I say that it is in such circumstances that the inadequacies of the human condition are revealed?

76. But who was U Thant, he to whom today we pay a last tribute? He was born in Pantanaw, Burma, 65 years ago; before taking up his diplomatic career, he distinguished himself for his remarkable human and intellectual qualities, which marked him out clearly for administrative, political and diplomatic office in his country. Indeed, he was head teacher at the National Secondary School of Pantanaw, where he was appointed director in 1931 after having obtained first place in the examination for secondary-school teachers. Later on, he worked as a journalist with newspapers and on the radio in his country between 1942 and 1948.

77. His political life began in 1955, when he was appointed Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Council of Burma. In the diplomatic field, the presence of U Thant continually made itself felt when questions of South-East Asia and the third world were concerned, teaching wisdom and firmness to some, and realism, patience and tolerance to others. Thus, he acted as assistant to the Prime Minister of his country at Colombo, at Bogor in Indonesia, at the Bandung Conference of African-Asian Nations in 1955, and at the First Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries at Belgrade, in 1961. In the same year, he was named Chairman of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Zaire, the former Belgian Congo. In this capacity, he was able fully to contribute to the establishment of peace in that part of our continent.

78. On 3 November 1961, he was appointed Secretary-General of the United Nations, in the period after Africa and Asia had begun to take part in international life and at a time when the eyes of the whole world were turned towards Africa as it underwent the most diverse and painful political changes.

79. Need I say that he to whose memory today we pay a most solemn, heartfelt and serene tribute was and remains in our minds not only a great universalist but also and above all an untiring defender of small nations in general and Africa in particular? He was

a true universalist, for throughout the 10 years in which he served the Organization he devoted every instant of his life with a quasi-religious faith to the purposes and principles of our Charter. U Thant was present everywhere on the international scene, whenever the future of the community of mankind was threatened, whether socially, politically or economically.

80. If this great man is a model for the third world, for Africa he remains the perpetual embodiment of our fundamental aspirations. We saw him by our side in our meeting halls when the fate of Africa was being discussed. That is why the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity in 1970 adopted the following motion:

“Having heard the statement of His Excellency U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations, made at the solemn inaugural meeting,

“Decides to vote a special motion of gratitude to His Excellency U Thant for his praiseworthy efforts, his complete understanding of the problems of the African continent and of the concerns of its peoples and its leaders and for his great contribution to the implementation of the similar objectives of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity with regard to freedom and progress in Africa as well as to international peace and security.”

81. In the light of the event that has called us together today, this declaration of our heads of State and Government acquires the significance of an act of faith—faith in the man who throughout his life never ceased to turn his eyes towards freedom, justice, happiness and peace among peoples.

82. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I now call on Mr. Zenon Rossides, the representative of Cyprus, to address the Assembly on behalf of the group of Asian States.

83. Mr. ROSSIDES (Cyprus): It is with profound sorrow and a sense of loss that on this solemn occasion I come to the rostrum, on behalf of the Asian group, to pay homage to our widely beloved former Secretary-General U Thant. A son of Asia endowed with all the moral and intellectual qualities of outstanding greatness, he was a scholar, thinker, philosopher and diplomat at one and the same time, and he excelled in all.

84. U Thant during his life unsparingly gave of himself to the cause of humanity through the United Nations in an unparalleled example of dedication to the Charter and of identification with the noblest and highest ideals of man. All U Thant's actions bore the mark of his intellectual integrity, his objective and balanced judgement and his political sagacity. It has been said that the Secretary-General is the man with the greatest responsibility but the least power of authority. This is true from the aspect of material power. But U Thant possessed the power deriving from his great moral authority, which immeasurably enhanced the authority implicit in the Organization itself and its Charter.

85. As U Thant often remarked, the intellectual progress of man in his outstanding achievements in science and technology falls within the domain of the West. But the high achievements in the spiritual field, in the expression of the inward qualities of

man, come within the province of the East. And, indeed, Asia has been the mother and the origin of all five major religions—from Buddhism and Hinduism to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. All came from the East.

86. U Thant was profoundly influenced by his Buddhist faith and its philosophy. The fundamental principle of Buddhism is to bring peace and harmony to the world. U Thant strictly adhered to that principle and often referred to and quoted the relevant United Nations purpose from the Charter, namely, “to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations”. Buddhism, with its freedom from fanaticism and dogma, gave U Thant the tolerance, calm and serenity with which he was endowed, and his deep instinct to avoid evil—even thinking of evil. He was never afraid nor hesitant to speak out on moral issues and could not be neutral on questions involving right or wrong.

87. Another great quality of his was compassion, a compassion that extended to a universal compassion for all humanity, as a moral quality opening the way to the broader political concept of international and global co-operation of all men, so needed in our present-day interdependent world.

88. The first reason that prompted his intervention in Biafra was the humanitarian aspect of the famine involved. Subsequently, however, he gave the constructive support of the United Nations towards the unification of Nigeria and against the secession of Biafra, with salutary effects.

89. In a difficult and dramatic period of history full of international problems, he successfully and effectively steered the Organization through one crisis after another with dedication to principle and diplomatic skill in giving substance to the promise of the Charter. At a decisive moment, in the Congo crisis, U Thant acted with courage and determination in using the United Nations Force to protect the territorial integrity of the Congo, which was seriously threatened at the time by the secessionist machinations of Katanga. As a result, Zaire is now a single, progressive nation.

90. Subsequently, in the gravest of all crises, when the two super-Powers came to the very brink of immediate confrontation over Cuba in 1962, at the crucial moment U Thant exercised brilliant diplomatic skill and firmness through the timely exercise of his good offices by making constructive proposals, compromise proposals, and strong effective appeals to both sides for such a compromise. It is only fair in this respect not to forget to mention that he was enabled to take that stand by the decisive action of the non-aligned and third world nations. At the height of the crisis when the Security Council was unable to take any action, the non-aligned countries, at a late night meeting on 23 October 1962, decided unanimously to urge the Secretary-General to take immediate action on suggested balanced proposals prepared at that meeting. When that decision was instantly communicated by the concerned group of the non-aligned to U Thant, his eyes sparkled when he said: “I have now the needed backing for action”, and unhesitatingly he started drafting the strongly-worded appeals that finally brought acceptance from both sides. That is reported in the relevant Security Council verbatim

record. Thus, the most dangerous of all crises since the Second World War was resolved in a manner that prompted President Kennedy to say that "U Thant has put the world deeply in his debt". I speak from personal experience, as I happened to be directly involved in that effort.

91. On the problem of Cyprus, U Thant, as Secretary-General, from the very start showed great concern and took a strong position for its peaceful solution in a balanced way and in accordance with the principles of the Charter for the preservation of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cyprus in a unitary State. My Government will always remember with deep gratitude his abiding concern and his genuine efforts towards a just and peaceful solution of the problem.

92. U Thant has always been alert to the significance of the global aspect of problems, and early in his career in the United Nations, before he became Secretary-General, he said in the General Assembly:

"What the world desperately needed was an organization whose existence expressed not a Utopian fantasy but the greatest international reality of all as symbolizing humanity's collective need for peace and survival, a need which overrides national or ideological interests of any Member State."

And to this day that remains the major problem of the United Nations in the Security Council. For indeed the meaningful purpose of its existence, as we know, is not merely to adopt resolutions but also to ensure their due and effective implementation.

93. During the decade of U Thant's term of office a number of global problems assumed threatening dimensions that far transcended in their implications ordinary international problems involving political or ideological issues. U Thant showed great concern over those new problems. Some time before his retirement, he left to the world a legacy and a warning. It was prompted by his profound concern for the future of the world and was based on the convergence of the highest scientific studies regarding the inevitable effects of the rapidly deteriorating and threatening global problems. As he declared in his address to the Institute of Man and Science at the State University of New York at Albany, in 1969, U Thant came to the conclusion that:

"The Members of the United Nations have perhaps 10 years left in which to subordinate their ancient quarrels and launch a global partnership to curb the arms race, to improve the human environment, to diffuse the population explosion and to supply the required momentum to the world development efforts."

94. The profound significance of that message by U Thant I am glad to note has been emphasized by other speakers from this rostrum this morning. U Thant's main concern in that message was that the life-supporting system of the earth was rapidly running down and that national Governments, far from responding to a common challenge posed by the threatening danger, were intensifying the problem.

95. Half the time available according to U Thant's warning has already elapsed and not only has there been no improvement in the world situation but the

arms race continues unabated, and even at an increased tempo, and there has been no substantial move towards improvement in any of the areas indicated in U Thant's warning statement.

96. It is a matter of concern for the United Nations today. It would therefore seem that we can erect the most appropriate and meaningful monument to the memory of U Thant by lending substance and effect to the profound and inspired wisdom of his warning by further scientific investigation into the dangers and prospects ahead, with a view to a radical reappraisal of trends throughout the world.

97. Surely the United Nations is the proper place for an in-depth survey of world trends and the directions in which they are taking us in order to provide the basis for urgent and timely remedial action. Properly employed, the United Nations can provide an early-warning system and chart a new course that would avoid impending disaster.

98. It was U Thant's profoundest hope that the United Nations would assume the central and most vital roles in the affairs of mankind. The Members of the United Nations will, we trust and hope, give our Secretary-General, Mr. Kurt Waldheim, all support and assistance in any efforts towards that end.

99. On this occasion we may rededicate ourselves to the development of this signal task for the progress of the world. In that way we should most fittingly and productively serve the ever-abiding memory of a great man in the history of the United Nations—U Thant, friend of all humanity.

100. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I now call on Mr. Peter Florin, the representative of the German Democratic Republic, to address the Assembly on behalf of the socialist States of Eastern Europe.

101. Mr. FLORIN (German Democratic Republic) (*interpretation from Russian*): The group of socialist States of Eastern Europe shares in the universal and profound grief at the death of the third Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant, and expresses its deep condolences.

102. The life and work of U Thant were closely linked to the United Nations. For 10 years, U Thant served as Secretary-General of the United Nations. It was a complex and difficult time in the life of the Organization, a turbulent time. The Organization suffered from considerable inadequacies. However, what we have today is the inevitable result of the achievements and successes of those years.

103. As a diplomatic and governmental figure, U Thant was completely devoted to the cause of strengthening peace and security, to the settlement of controversial questions through negotiation, to the solution of urgent problems of disarmament and, particularly, to the achievement of progress in the liberation of colonial and dependent peoples. With his work are connected documents of such historic import as the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples [*resolution 1514 (XV)*]; the Moscow Treaty Banning Nuclear-Weapons Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water; the non-proliferation Treaty; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and

Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction [*resolution 2826 (XXVI)*]; the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security [*resolution 2734 (XXV)*]; the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations [*resolution 2625 (XXV)*]; and many others.

104. U Thant spoke out courageously against aggression, endeavoured to settle armed conflicts and to defuse dangerous hotbeds of tension. He was genuinely at the service of the lofty principles of the United Nations Charter.

105. The Socialist States of Eastern Europe have always attached great importance to the United Nations as an instrument for the maintenance of peace and security and the development of international co-operation. In its work, our group is unswervingly guided by the principles and purposes enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and it has supported their implementation.

106. U Thant repeatedly visited the Socialist countries. His meetings with the leaders of the socialist States had a favourable impact on the work of the United Nations, since the constructive, peaceful policy of the community of Socialist States is in keeping with the interests of more peoples than their own.

107. Since the time U Thant was our deeply respected Secretary-General, great changes have taken place in the international arena. The world situation is now characterized by a trend towards the easing of tension; the principles of peaceful coexistence and co-operation among States are becoming the norms of international relations. There has been considerable improvement in the climate needed to guarantee peace and the development on an equal footing of international co-operation among States and peoples and, thus, the implementation of the main purposes of the Organization.

108. Meeting here to pay a tribute to the memory of the great leader who for many years as Secretary-General stood at the head of the United Nations, we remember the words he used in the introduction to his last report on the work of our Organization. He said:

“... I have directed all my faith and efforts towards maintaining and developing this Organization as an indispensable centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of our common ends and as an increasingly effective instrument for peace and development.”³

In taking that position, U Thant, the outstanding representative of the group of non-aligned States, earned international respect and authority. We follow his words, increasing the effectiveness of the Organization on the basis of strict observance of its Charter, so that the process of *détente* that has begun may become irreversible and the principles of peaceful coexistence may be fully implemented.

109. We all know that after he left the Organization, U Thant devoted his entire time to writing his memoirs on his time at the service of the United Nations as its Secretary-General. We are eagerly awaiting the publication of that book. It is a worthy legacy to the United Nations and we should seriously ponder it.

110. U Thant was a humble man of lofty ideals to whose implementation he devoted all his life and strength. His ideals live in our Organization. May we be guided by the splendid words of the deceased with which I will venture to conclude my statement. He wrote:

“During my tenure as Secretary-General, I tirelessly worked to achieve the goals of peace, justice and progress, and whatever role life assigns me in the future, I will continue to do so.”⁴

111. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I now call on Mr. Raoul Siclait, the representative of Haiti, speaking on behalf of the group of Latin American States.

112. Mr. SICLAIT (Haiti) (*interpretation from French*): On the occasion of the death of U Thant, the third Secretary-General of the United Nations, on 25 November of this year, a number of speakers have already paid a tribute to the deceased.

113. The group of Latin American States over which it is my honour to preside at the present time, like all other regional groups, has lost a great friend, and for that reason we wish today to take part in this gathering devoted to the memory of U Thant. In these painful circumstances, may I first ask his family to accept the sincerest condolences of our group.

114. U Thant was born at Pantanaw, 50 miles from Rangoon, the capital of Burma, on 22 January 1909. He studied in his native city and in Rangoon, and he began his career in teaching, where he was a Professor of History at the University of Rangoon, and in journalism, in which he continued until the time of the independence of his country. He left the teaching profession in 1948; subsequently he held a number of Cabinet posts, then he was appointed in 1957 as Ambassador and the Permanent Representative of Burma to the United Nations.

115. In the course of his career U Thant became known for his warm humanity. His great knowledge of history made it possible for him to analyse events and their causes in depth, and to deal conscientiously with the problems submitted to his ever-active attention. He believed in the sound principles of justice and equity; he was deeply imbued with the teachings of Buddhism and he practised love of his fellow man.

116. When, in 1961, he succeeded the then Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, who had fallen in the line of duty, and whose tragic death was a shock to us all, U Thant, remaining faithful to the principles to which he had devoted all his strength in his teaching post and in his various other functions, worked tirelessly to bring peace to a troubled world. His sense of equity and justice was the golden rule of his existence; it guided his work as Secretary-General of the Organization and placed him above antagonistic blocs. In the fullest sense of the term, because of his rectitude and proverbial impartiality, he was a model international civil servant. Because of his convictions and natural penchant for the cause of peace, he did much to contribute to a certain degree of stability in the Congo, which is now Zaire, during the secession of Katanga. He also used the same dynamism in even more crucial circumstances when the atomic Powers threatened each other with a confrontation.

117. The Latin American group will always remember this man who, with his modesty, selflessness, serenity, amiable nature and the warmth of his personality, won the respect of the international community. His tolerance of one and all, not to mention his sense of justice and of a job well done, won the admiration of his associates and of all those who had the privilege of working with him. His efforts to promote the idea of the universal representation of States in the Organization, his contribution to *détente*, his many actions to help those countries victims of natural catastrophes, all marked the distinct personality of that great idealist U Thant, who had always worked for the cause of peace. His perceptive mind helped him to understand better than anyone the way in which our world was evolving.

118. U Thant always wanted the happiness of mankind. And so it was that he always endeavoured to reduce the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots". His valuable reports to the Economic and Social Council are irrefutable proof of that.

119. The group of Latin American States, through me, pays a tribute to the memory of that great citizen of the world and we wish to express once again to the family of the deceased, to the people and to the Government of Burma, our sense of profound sorrow. U Thant has completed his journey and he will indeed sleep the sleep of the just.

120. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I call now on Mr. Eugenio Plaja, the representative of Italy, to address the Assembly on behalf of the group of Western European and other States.

121. Mr. PLAJA (Italy): It is indeed with deep emotion that I take the floor today, on behalf of the group of Western European and other States, to pay a sincere and heartfelt tribute to the memory of U Thant, former Secretary-General of the United Nations; the more so—if I may be allowed to add a personal note—having had the great privilege of becoming acquainted with him even before he was chosen to head the Secretariat of the United Nations, when he was Permanent Representative of his country to the United Nations. I thus learned to appreciate his wisdom, skill and discretion, which were accompanied by those qualities of humanity, culture and eclectic universalism so characteristic of the oriental world and civilization of which he was a faithful expression.

122. The news of his death has plunged us all into great sorrow and grief. We knew of his recent illness, but were completely unprepared for his untimely passing away, which has left us with a sense of great loss. We share the grief of his family, to whom we convey our most profound condolences.

123. It is not easy to accomplish the task of capturing in a few words the outstanding qualities, both human and political, the personality and the statesmanship of U Thant. With his death, not only the Organization, but the whole family of nations, has lost one of its most brilliant sons, a great man who devoted his entire life to the cause of peace and who, especially during his 10-year period of office, spared no effort to contribute to the inception of the process of *détente* that, notwithstanding the difficulties still existing in some areas of the world, we are witnessing today.

124. His personality may be measured in terms of the difficulties he had to face from the very beginning of his mandate. It was a period of serious, sometimes dramatic crises and tensions. It was a period in which the problems of decolonization came to the forefront in international life. I shall not dwell on them, since they have been described in detail by the speakers who have preceded me in this tribute to the memory of U Thant. What I want to underline is that the repercussions of those crises, tensions and problems threatened the future of our Organization.

125. It was due largely to his untiring efforts, his foresight and diplomatic skill, his sense of duty and his commitment to the lofty ideals of the Charter that it became possible for him to steer a course that won him the confidence and backing of all the Members of the United Nations, and confirmed their trust in the Organization as the forum where all the different political and economic views in the international community find a common ground in the search for peaceful solutions through mutual understanding and compromise.

126. It would be impossible to review here the many achievements in the accomplishment of U Thant's mandate as Secretary-General of the United Nations. Besides his contribution to the settlement of the world's political problems, as I outlined above, I should like to recall that, during his term of office, the Organization also became increasingly aware of the importance of its role in defining and seeking solutions to economic, social and human rights problems. U Thant perceived this development, which struck a chord in his feelings as a human being even before those of a statesman, and he encouraged it, since he understood how important it was for the future of so large a part of suffering mankind.

127. The name of U Thant has therefore become a symbol of the ideals of justice, brotherhood and international co-operation, to the development of which he made a great contribution. His name is linked to the historical process whereby persevering and constructive contacts among all nations have opened the way to international coexistence and improved conditions for the underprivileged. He always remained faithful to the concept of the United Nations as a centre in which all ideas could find their place in harmony and co-operation for the creation of a better and more just society. He will, therefore, remain one of the outstanding figures of our Organization—indeed, of our time—deserving the gratitude of all countries and people.

128. Through his thoughts and actions during his life, and particularly during his term of office as the top international civil servant of the world, U Thant has thus left us a great spiritual message. It is up to us to try to heed this message, and to translate into living reality those ideals of peace and international co-operation to which he devoted his life. I realize that this is not an easy task, if we consider the quantity and the magnitude of the problems we still have to face in the political, economic and social fields. But I am convinced that only by following the ideals in which he believed will we overcome the difficulties ahead of us, and I cannot imagine a more appropriate and noble way of paying tribute to the memory of U Thant than to commit ourselves to heeding his message.

129. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I call now on Mr. Driss Slaoui, the representative of Morocco, to address the Assembly on behalf of the group of Arab States.

130. Mr. SLAOUI (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): This morning, when the United Nations and all those assembled in this Hall are paying a last respectful and moving tribute to U Thant, that great statesman who has just passed away, I have the honour, on behalf the group of Arab States, of His Majesty King Hassan II and the people of Morocco, to extend to you, Mr. President, to the Secretary-General and to the international community our profound condolences, since the loss of that great man is a tragedy which affects us all.

131. With his passing, we and the international community as a whole have lost one of the greatest men and diplomats, one of the best statesmen we have ever known, and, first and foremost, a great and generous man—a broad-minded man who embodied the loftiest human ideals.

132. It is indeed an irreparable tragedy for us. U Thant is gone, and thus we are today meeting to pay tribute to his memory, to his accomplishments, to his integrity, to his loyalty and to his courageous stands. We draw inspiration from his wisdom, far-sightedness and sagacity, and we follow the example of his experience. In the 1960s the entire world knew U Thant as someone who struggled tirelessly for the well-being of the world, of the international community and of all mankind.

133. We still remember him as he guided our steps, with an unshakeable faith in the goodness of man and confident in the triumph of wisdom and reason over everything else.

134. U Thant was Secretary-General of the United Nations at a time when deep problems were lurking on a sombre horizon. He was able to lead us towards new fields of hope and light. During his tenure the United Nations was painfully afflicted with a grave crisis, which broke out in the 1960s as a result of the cold war between East and West and the arms race. Today, however, there is a glimmer of hope because of the spirit of *détente* in international relations.

135. U Thant was here when the third world came into being, when the entire world became aware of the importance and weight of the third world, and of the need to enable it to play its rightful role in the community of nations. A faithful son of the third world, U Thant was also its best guide.

136. The Arab nation pays a heartfelt tribute to this great man who took courageous positions during the darkest hours in order to defend justice and equality, to observe valiantly the United Nations Charter, particularly after the 1967 aggression. We still remember his sincere, tireless efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Middle East crisis. His courageous stand on the problem of Viet Nam during the escalation of the war there provides another eloquent proof of his sincerity and his disinterested attitude, of his concern that the voice of the world's conscience should be heard. His realistic and resolute position on other international problems, too, gives us the measure of his genius, his loyalty, his integrity and his wisdom.

137. Those were some of U Thant's qualities. As we pay a respectful tribute to him, we pay a tribute also to his great work. May his soul rest in peace. We extend our sincere condolences to Burma. We express the hope that his bereaved family will find consolation.

138. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I now call on Mr. W. Tapley Bennett, Jr. of the United States of America, as representative of the host country.

139. Mr. BENNETT (United States of America): Ambassador Scali very much regrets that he has been stranded in the Midwest in a snowstorm, with no transportation available to enable him to return to New York so that he could speak from this rostrum as we meet here, in sorrow, to pay a tribute to the memory of a great man.

140. For my own part, I would say that I knew the Secretary-General, U Thant, for a number of years; I had the benefit of his perception and his wise and thoughtful counsel; I served with him on the Committee for the Memorial to Ralph Bunche. I therefore regard it as a very real privilege to speak today on behalf of the host country.

141. U Thant served as Secretary-General for longer than any other man. In the process, he saw the United Nations through a time of great difficulties, a period of profound change on the international scene and in the make-up of this Organization.

142. At the time of its creation the United Nations was essentially an association of the victors of the Second World War. Today it is a nearly universal gathering of free and independent nations, representing among them nearly all the world's peoples. U Thant in his own person did much to symbolize this change. More significantly, he succeeded during his long tenure as Secretary-General in holding this Organization together through some of its worst crises, under pressures never foreseen by its founders.

143. There exist today, as there did then, strong temptations for nations to sacrifice the prestige and the authority of his Organization for transient gains, for propaganda victories. Such temptations are faced, I imagine, by virtually every Member Government at one time or another. To succumb to them, however, is to prejudice the real interests of every nation, great or small, which profits from the existence of a strong and vigorous United Nations.

144. U Thant recognized well the transcendent need to protect this institution, to preserve its Charter. He understood that were the United Nations to become the partisan instrument of any faction, majority or not, it would inevitably lose the support of other, substantial segments of its membership.

145. U Thant never accepted a passive, or uninvolved, role for himself or for the United Nations, even on the most controversial of issues. On the contrary, in his characteristically quiet and unassuming way, in his calm and modest manner, U Thant acted in his own person and with the authority of his high office as a powerful force for peace and reconciliation. Following only the dictates of his conscience and the best interests of the United Nations as he saw them, he sought time and again to influence Member Governments towards the paths of peace and justice.

146. U Thant combined to a unique degree the clear and forceful moral insights of a great teacher with the restraint and flexibility of a great statesman. He possessed an inner harmony and an unshakeable conviction. All those qualities were called for at a time when strong passions were sweeping the world and new forces were emerging in history.

147. The success of U Thant's efforts is evidenced in his legacy to us of a still vital world organization, operating under a still effective Charter. We will in the years to come have much need of men like him to preserve, and to build on, this inheritance which he has left us.

148. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): The last speaker on my list this morning is U Lwin, the representative of Burma, on whom I now call.

149. U LWIN (Burma): Mr. President, the world mourns the passing of U Thant, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, on 25 November 1974. Eulogies and tributes by world leaders and common people alike are still pouring in. It is but fitting, Sir, that this special ceremony is being held by the General Assembly under your Presidency in honour of the memory of U Thant, who was a most distinguished and illustrious son not only of Burma but of Asia and the developing world. The fact however remains that, in the final analysis, he was a son of the whole world.

150. The dedication and selflessness with which U Thant served mankind in his capacity as Secretary-General of the United Nations have won universal acclaim. His devotion to the ideals and principles of the United Nations Charter and to the cause of peace will long be cherished in the memories of all of us. The 10 years during which he served as Secretary-General have rightly been called the most tumultuous years in the history of the United Nations. These years saw the emergence of Africa; the big-Power rivalry and confrontation, in other words, the cold-war years; the pursuit of the goal of global disarmament as a means of mankind's salvation; the awareness of the urgency and necessity of economic and social advancement of the developing world; the tragedy of the Viet Nam war; and the unsettling series of events which led to conflict in the Middle East, to name only a few of the complex and insurmountable problems the world community faced. These events and changes are of tremendous historical importance, the impact of which is still shaking the world today.

151. Throughout all these tumultuous years U Thant held the helm of this world Organization with his usual calmness, without fear or favour, and in this almost impossible task he won the admiration and respect of all. The whole world recognizes his achievements and this world Organization is now appropriately paying tribute to its favourite son.

152. Since U Thant served for 10 long years as Secretary-General, he was very closely identified with the United Nations itself. In this respect, a repre-

sentative, in his statement before this august body on 26 November, said:

"The personality of U Thant had become so familiar in this house and so much identified with the United Nations that even after his retirement and his departure he seemed always to be here among us with his smile so full of humanity and bearing the mark of greatness in humility." [2298th meeting, para. 3.]

153. The correctness of this assessment is confirmed by the fact that when he passed away, his body lay in state at the United Nations, in accordance with his expressed wishes. For the honour thus accorded him my country will be eternally grateful.

154. I should be remiss in my duty were I to fail to pay personal tribute to U Thant for his qualities and his humanity, as both a compatriot and a predecessor of mine as Permanent Representative of Burma to the United Nations.

155. Allow me, Mr. President, to express, on behalf of the people and the Government of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, our profound appreciation and thanks to you; to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kurt Waldheim; to the past Presidents of the General Assembly, namely Mr. Carlos Romulo, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, Mrs. Angie Brooks-Randolph, Ambassador-at-Large of Liberia, and Mr. Leopoldo Benites, Permanent Representative of Ecuador; to all the chairmen of the regional groups; to the members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations; to the members of the group of Arab States; to Mr. Tapley Bennett of the host country; and to all the Member States for the moving tributes they have paid to U Thant.

156. I should like to assure you also that the expressions of condolence will be conveyed to the bereaved family and to my Government.

157. Many speakers in the Assembly and many people throughout the world have prayed for U Thant, that his soul may rest in peace. Likewise, as a co-religionist of U Thant, who was a very devout Buddhist, I appeal to this Assembly and to the people of the whole world to join me in praying for U Thant that he may attain Nirvana.

158. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I should like to inform the General Assembly that U Thant will be buried next Thursday in his native country of Burma. We have now concluded this meeting in solemn tribute to the memory of U Thant.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.

NOTES

¹ See *Portfolio for Peace* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.70.1.24).

² Press Release SG/SM/1531, 16 September 1971.

³ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 1A (A/8401/Add.1)*, para. 151.

⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 152.