

## Message

by Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky  
United Nations Under-Secretary-General,  
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva  
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It is often said that the United Nations - indeed the whole world - is currently undergoing a radical transformation. However, there is no agreed understanding of the substance of this process, nor of the role which the World Organization should play in its development. I would like, therefore, to briefly outline the main tasks of the UN, as viewed from inside the Organization.

Perhaps, the most important development in contemporary international politics is the collapse of the system of relations among States which has been in existence since the Congress of Vienna of 1815. This was the system based on the balance of power, where a small group of the most influential States - often called the Superpowers - were able to determine the course of major international events, indeed the fate of the world. This system has occasionally been revised, in particular after the First and Second World Wars, but its essence remained unchanged. Today, it is no longer valid.

No single power, nor even a group of States, can now impose its will on the international community. Whatever action it plans to take, it first needs to seek the agreement of at least the majority of the States. Any unilateral move provokes an immediate counter-reaction which calls into question its effectiveness. Thus, multilateralism is becoming the major tool of international transactions. From a UN perspective, this means that the Organization must complete its transformation from a battlefield for ideological warfare into a

forum for collective decision-making based on true democracy and international law.

For centuries, the State has been the only participant in international relations. Today, new and powerful forces are entering international politics. Non-State actors - such as business and labour organizations as well as the mass media - are increasingly influencing world political events. It is noteworthy that nowadays every major UN meeting - such as the Earth Summit in Rio or the recent World Human Rights Conference in Vienna - is accompanied by a parallel event organized by non-governmental organizations and Governments are obliged to take into account their ideas and proposals.

Accordingly, the task of the UN is to find new ways and means of bridging the gap between the traditional approach and the new international environment, in which the Organization will rely on the support of a much broader social and political foundation. This was, in fact, the initial purpose of the World Organization. As you will recall, the UN Charter opens with the words: "We the Peoples of the United Nations ...".

As a result of these two trends, there is an evident tendency towards globalization of foreign policy issues. An event which could have gone unnoticed before - such as a case of violation of human rights or a local conflict - today triggers an immediate reaction all over the globe. For the World Organization, this means a tremendous increase in the volume of its work. With its 19 specialized agencies, the UN is involved in practically every sphere of human activities - from setting international standards for traffic regulation to resolving regional conflicts. For example, during the first 40 years of its existence, the UN undertook 13 peace-keeping operations. Today, it is

conducting 17 such operations simultaneously and has over 70,000 civilian and military personnel serving in them. Thus, the Organization is facing an extremely difficult task in reconciling its new, rapidly expanding responsibilities with its rather limited resources.

Any transformation can be both a blessing and a curse. The negative side-effects of the current global changes seem to have a cumulative effect. There is a real danger that increasing instability may lead to disastrous and unpredictable consequences. Thus, one of the most important tasks the UN is now facing is to serve as the world's "safety net", to absorb the shocks of rapid change and smooth the transition to the new international system.

It was once said that the experience of everyday life determines the state of the mind. As far as international politics is concerned, quite the opposite seems to be the case. Despite all these global transformations, some politicians are still resisting the changes. Thinking in terms of balance of power, selfish pursuit of the interests of a single State, nation or ethnic group and ceaseless searching out of enemies is still widespread. Fundamentalism, of a religious or political variety, is one of the major causes of the current instability in the world. The UN Secretary-General recently defined this situation as "a crisis in the psychology of international relations". Thus, what the UN needs most of all is to facilitate the creation of a new philosophy of international interactions, a new concept of human civilization, one that will unite the peoples of the world rather than divide them into good and bad, virtuous and evil.

The basic elements of such a philosophy have already been introduced in the UN Secretary-General's report "An Agenda for Peace" which provides the

conceptual framework for UN efforts in conflict resolution and peace building. In the forthcoming report “An Agenda for Development”, this concept will be further refined in correlation with the notions of stability and economic and social progress.

I hope that the discussions at this Workshop will give birth to new ideas and approaches for further development and strengthening of the United Nations.