

Statement by H. E Mr. Kasenally to the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, 30 September 1993

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Mauritius delegation, it is my pleasure and privilege to extend to Mr. Insanally our heartiest congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session. We wish to assure him and members of his Bureau of our full cooperation and support in the tasks that lie ahead of them. The election of a representative of Guyana to the presidency of this Assembly is gratifying in more ways than one and underlines the fact that even the smallest of States belonging to this Organization has a role to play on the international scene and will not shy away from any responsibility that may be entrusted to it, however big the challenge.

We should also like to place on record our appreciation of his predecessor for the commendable manner in which he conducted the deliberations of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

Mauritius is pleased to welcome into the family of the United Nations its new Members: Andorra, the Czech Republic, Eritrea, Monaco, the Slovak Republic and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. We are hopeful that these new Members will uphold and strengthen the ideals enshrined in the Charter of this Organization and we look forward to their active participation in our deliberations.

It is important, in my delegation's view, that I address in the first instance an issue of prime concern to the functioning of our Organization. There is at present much debate and ambivalence about the future role and orientations of the United Nations. While it is generally accepted that the United Nations as a multilateral organization should adapt to and reflect the profound changes that have taken place since its founding, considerable doubt exists on what proposals and practical measures should be adopted to make the United Nations system more effective and forge it into a relevant instrument of global governance. Is the United Nations able to respond to the new demands, opportunities and challenges that have emerged especially since the end of the cold war and still remain true to its Charter? That the United Nations in recent years has already been able to play a more central role in world affairs and assume greater responsibilities in the wide range of social and political problems is an indication that it has earned the growing acceptance of the world community as a legitimate vehicle for addressing significant global issues.

However, beneath the prestige of regained moral stature and recognition that its ideals and message are still valid is the reality that the United Nations administrative structures and institutions are in dire need of reform. The United Nations system remains ill-equipped for the scope of its current operations and activities. The evolving nature of the United Nations will therefore have a crucial impact on the future shape and management of the post-cold-war international economic and political environment.

The current debate on revitalization and restructuring hinges on whether the United Nations should become more focused or more encompassing. Despite clear pronouncements for change at the level of the Assembly, the Security Council, social and economic organs and peacekeeping operations, it is evident that many Member States are neither expecting the process to result in any sweeping structural reforms nor contemplating a revision of the Charter.

Progress will therefore need to come from within, the result of a balancing act between divergent interests and political considerations. It would be unfortunate, however, if such an agreement were merely a reflection of a lowest common denominator rather than the product of genuine cooperation.

I concede that the reform of such an Organization is no easy task and requires the assistance of one and all. Last year the Mauritius delegation to the General Assembly commended the Secretary-General's efforts at reforming our Organization. I should like to reiterate our appreciation for what has been achieved so far and our support for the work currently being undertaken by the Secretary-General to revitalize the United Nations.

I remain convinced that the emerging global situation has brought the objective of restructuring the United Nations system within reach. Such reform should, in the end, cater for the aspirations of the peoples of this world and enable the Organization to respond favourably to the emerging new expectations.

The General Assembly, we believe, ought to be encouraged, by its increased membership and a general trend towards democratization, to assume a more preponderant place in the affairs of the Organization. It should strengthen its policy-making role, especially in the social and economic fields, so as to exercise greater balance with the Security Council, whose mandate is now expanding beyond the traditional delineation of threats to peace and security into such areas as human-rights violations and humanitarian assistance, through preventive diplomacy and innovative peace-keeping operations. Thus, while remaining the crucial forum for discussion, the General Assembly would increase its capacity to respond to major problems and take initiatives.

On the other hand, greater consensus among its members has enabled the Security Council to assert its authority and break new ground in authorizing the use of force under Chapter VII of the Charter - for example, in Somalia, where domestic jurisdiction would normally apply, or Yugoslavia, through preventive action. The Council has also had more frequent recourse to sanctions, using them on five occasions since 1990. The intensification of the United Nations presence has undeniably enhanced the reputation of the Organization. But it has also raised questions about the Council's composition and apprehension over its decisionmaking process.

The new responsibilities and importance assumed by the Council would justify, in our view, some form of enlargement to reflect the new level of membership of the United Nations. A more representative Council would earn recognition and legitimate

acceptance and be able to take action quickly and effectively with the imprimatur of fairness.

The Council could, we believe, withstand changes and still retain its main executive function, while improving at the same time its coordination with other United Nations bodies, such as the General Assembly.

Peace-keeping has become one of the major responsibilities of the Council. The rapid expansion of peace-keeping operations and the huge involvement of United Nations personnel in this area have boosted confidence in the Organization and given it a higher international profile. Unfortunately, peace-keeping is also becoming a heavy burden in terms of financial and human resources, which threatens to curtail the Organization's involvement in other priority areas. Peace-keeping should not be confined merely to narrow security objectives, excluding broader considerations of non-military threats to security.

The Security Council has, in fact, special responsibility in shaping the future of peace-keeping as an effective safeguard in areas of conflict, or potential conflict, in volatile domestic or regional situations where major threats to international peace reside today.

However, as the Secretary-General notes in his report on the implementation of the recommendations of his "Agenda for Peace",

"Peace-keeping is in a state of rapid evolution as the United Nations is asked to undertake increasingly complex and dangerous tasks."

As the mandate of peace-keeping operations extends beyond their traditional domain into such areas as electoral assistance, humanitarian relief activities, human-rights monitoring, assistance for nation-building, border-monitoring and sanctions enforcement, clearer peace-keeping guidelines and standards, based on properly defined mandates and adequate financial support, become essential. Within the parameters of fundamental principles and their interpretation, peace-keeping operations should be designed to work. The United Nations has made good use of the lessons of concrete and painful experience.

Mauritius, for its part, would like to suggest that when carrying out the reform exercise we should not only address the issues of financial resources or expansion of the membership of the Security Council, but also look at matters of concern raised in other forums and their attendant consequences for this Organization. We should, hence, not fail to give due attention to the principles contained in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, adopted at the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly, especially with respect to the rejuvenation of equitable economic growth and development. We must bear clearly in mind other new and globally agreed programmes, such as the New Agenda for the Development of Africa, Agenda 21, which came out of the Rio Conference, and the recommendations of the second World Conference on Human Rights.

Any changes in the structure of the United Nations should be the product of as large a consensus as possible, in order to preserve the credibility of our Organization, and in this task we must be guided inexorably by the spirit of the United Nations Charter.

However, while we uphold this spirit, it is our opinion that serious consideration should be given to a review of the provisions of the Charter. A rereading of the Charter would enable us to look anew at its contents and allow us to propose amendments in the light of new world realities. I also urge that the Assembly insist on greater clarity in its resolutions. This will certainly facilitate action and prevent time lost discussing varying interpretations of resolutions.

No doubt, one of the most striking events since the last session of the General Assembly has been the second World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in June of this year. The Conference was an opportunity to review the evolution of the attitudes of the peoples of the world towards the upholding of the rights and dignity of man since the first World Conference on Human Rights, which was held in Tehran in 1968. The quarter of a century that separates the holding of these two Conferences has witnessed a lot of changes, notably the assertion of those States which emerged from the demise of colonization.

In Vienna, both the old and the new players in the world's human rights forums were able to put forward their concerns and aspirations. The discussions, though not always easy, had the advantage of being frank. We in Mauritius firmly believe that the end result of the Conference will be beneficial to the protection of the rights of the individual. We must see to it, however, that the provisions of the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action are implemented and do not become mere additional documents in the international archives. In this context, I wish yet again to make a special appeal to this Assembly for a substantial increase in the resources of the Centre for Human Rights to enable it to attend to its responsibilities with consistency and efficiency and thus contribute more effectively to the universal upholding of human rights.

Mauritius wishes to reiterate, in the most forceful manner possible, its support for the recommendation of the second World Conference on Human Rights that this Assembly address urgently the need to establish a post of United Nations high commissioner for human rights. It is our sincere hope that a favourable decision will be reached to reflect the wishes of the peoples of the world. Such an office would play the necessary role of coordinating United Nations work on human rights and would be the focal point for upholding human rights norms.

In keeping with its stand on human rights issues, Mauritius would also like to state its support for the responsibilities assigned to the International Tribunal for the prosecution of those responsible for the serious crimes committed against humanity in the territory of the former Yugoslavia since 1 January 1991. We would like to congratulate all those eminent persons who have been elected to sit on this Tribunal and wish them well in their difficult task.

Indeed, we view with great concern and sadness the atrocities and untold sufferings endured by the peoples of the former Republic of Yugoslavia, particularly the children. Let the impartial conclusions of the Tribunal serve as a lesson to those who believe they can get away with such degrading actions, such disrespect for human life. The seriousness and steadfastness with which the Tribunal carries out its duty will bear witness to the fact that the world community does not remain insensitive and will not be complacent in the face of such despicable and reprehensible acts wherever and whenever they occur. Yet as this century of our so-called civilized world fades away, the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be written with the blood of thousands of innocent men, women and children.

Earlier this year the world exulted at the news that France, the United States of America and the Russian Federation had voluntarily extended their moratoriums on nuclear testing. It is heartening to observe that 1993 may yet be the year when the world will have enjoyed the longest respite from nuclear testing and its attendant consequences, despite the recent disturbing reports pointing to the possibility of a resumption of nuclear testing by certain countries. No one doubts the nuclear strength of the countries which have made the moratorium a policy and it is to their credit that they have so far not been tempted to show their might by resuming nuclear testing.

It is our sincere wish that members of the nuclear club adhere to their declared moratoriums, for the resumption of nuclear testing by any of those States would jeopardize the 1995 conference for the review and extension of the non-proliferation Treaty, and would, to our mind, inevitably undermine the current efforts aimed at global disarmament.

It would be unrealistic on our part not to recognize that, despite uncertainties and ongoing foyers of tension, the world political climate has improved considerably. As cold war rivalry faded, significant bilateral progress was made with the conclusion of the START Treaties and the subsequent agreements for reduction in the respective nuclear arsenals of the erstwhile super-Powers. These positive efforts were reinforced internationally by the decision of a number of States, including France, China and South Africa, to adhere to the non-proliferation Treaty at a crucial phase in its review process.

Such encouraging developments bode well for all small nations like ours whose safety rests upon the foundations of a reliable collective security system. The recent historic agreement between the PLO and Israel and the imminent constitution of a democratic non-racial South Africa should pave the way for rapid progress towards the denuclearization of Africa. Likewise, we note with great satisfaction the consensus emerging in the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean to adopt new approaches in response to the changing international situation and give fresh impetus to the process of strengthening cooperation, peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region. The increased participation in this year's session suggests that the General Assembly could accordingly consider broadening the Committee's mandate.

Success at the regional level depends largely on a global atmosphere that is conducive to disarmament. We wish therefore to reiterate, in this perspective, the importance of the current negotiations for the review of the NPT and the conclusion of a test ban which should provide non-nuclear States with firm security assurances and address the various issues of nuclear proliferation. The threat of the spreading of smaller nuclear weapons is compounded by the availability of weapons-grade nuclear material produced from plutonium and highly enriched uranium and the relative lack of proper commercial safeguards. To these dangers must be added the potential hazard of nuclear pollution and the dumping of toxic wastes.

Casting a glance at the world in general, we have reason to hope for the advent of peace in the various hitherto violence-ridden regions of our planet in a not-too-distant future. On the African continent, we note a trend towards solutions to difficult situations. In Mozambique, we salute the signing of the General Peace Agreement for Mozambique between the Government of Mozambique and RENAMO, the Mozambique national resistance movement. We commend the positive contribution of the United Nations operations in Mozambique. We urge the leaders concerned to show sufficient flexibility in the current negotiations aimed at elaborating appropriate electoral laws for the country.

South Africa is another source of hope. We in Mauritius have been following very closely the evolution of discussions in the multiparty negotiating forum and are particularly appreciative of the resolution adopted unanimously by the Technical Negotiating Council on 16 August 1993, which endorses the return of Walvis Bay and the offshore islands to Namibia. We have had the opportunity to congratulate those responsible for this very positive step, which we also applaud as a confidencebuilding measure in that region.

We welcome the installation of the Transitional Executive Council and wish to pledge our readiness - as a country which has made, in its own modest way, its share of contributions to the democratization process across the world - to help in the preparations leading to the elections of 27 April 1994.

The capacity to dismantle apartheid, establish the basis of a new constitution by consensus, and agree on an election date within a few years is no mean achievement. However, whilst many rapid and positive changes are taking place, South Africa continues to be plagued by ceaseless violence. Time and again we have deplored the upsurge of violence which has cost the lives of several of Africa's most illustrious sons, among them the sorely missed Chris Hani. We therefore welcome wholeheartedly the proposal to establish a national peace force in South Africa, made up of representatives of all parties, which would be entrusted with the task of preventing violence in particularly volatile areas. The creation of this mechanism shows the determination and ardent desire of all in South Africa to resolve outstanding issues and to proceed as planned for violence-free elections in April of next year.

In Somalia, we have been distressed by the senseless killing of members of the United Nations Forces as well as Somali civilians. The skirmishes being witnessed in Somalia have regrettably shifted world attention away from the starving millions to manhunts. Women and children dying daily for want of food have been relegated insignificantly to the backstage. Mauritius would like to call on the leaders of the various Somali factions to revert to the agreement reached in Addis Ababa and submit themselves to the peacekeeping process within the context of the recently established Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts. Our fervent appeal to all those bent on perpetuating the blood bath in Somalia is to heed the concerns of the international community and indeed act in the interests of the Somali people rather than in their own selfish interests.

In our Indian Ocean region, on an issue of direct concern to us, I am happy to say that meaningful dialogue on the Chagos Archipelago is taking place with the United Kingdom authorities.

While we hail the success of the United Nations in Cambodia, we cannot but decry the atrocious situation in Angola, where thousands of lives are done away with daily. The question that must be asked is this: to what end will a country depleted of its human resources serve those who, in their desperation to be at the helm of affairs, are ready to sacrifice countless lives and lay waste that very country? We exhort Mr. Savimbi and his UNITA to come to terms with reality and accept the will of the Angolan people as expressed through the ballot box.

Outside the African continent, the Middle East, which has witnessed one of the most bitter conflicts of the century, heralds a new era. There is cause for satisfaction in the knowledge that the peace process which began at the Madrid Conference in October 1991 has taken a decisive turn with Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) extending mutual and official recognition to each other. Let us hope that the plan for Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho is but a prelude to Israel's complete withdrawal from the occupied territories, a *sine qua non* for a just and durable peace in the Middle East.

As I said earlier, we have reason to rejoice at the thought of more peaceful days in various areas of the world. However, this prospect is marred by other concerns. In Fiji the long-awaited review of the Constitution has not yet taken place, with the unfortunate result that the electoral system is in stagnation. We feel that meaningful changes in the Constitution, as promised by the Fijian authorities, will restore confidence in the Fijian community and will bring about smoother relations in the country for the benefit of all. Mauritius, as a multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic society, is willing, in all humility, to share with Fijian authorities the benefits of its own experience of harmonious living and to assist, should it be so wished, in the review of the Constitution.

While there are promising developments in the world, the global economy continues to evoke distress. The long awaited economic recovery in developed countries continues to be inconsistent and uneven; global economic stability remains more elusive than ever. Economic growth and development proper are the only durable, effective and equitable solution to instability and to a host of other associated problems facing the world. We believe, therefore, that it is the concern of the entire world to ponder seriously a new form of multilateralism which would ensure systematic coordination of policies involving all groups of countries.

We believe that the rapid internationalization of the world economy points to the urgency to resume North-South dialogue constructively and in a spirit of cooperation and understanding. This dialogue should become an instrument for the promotion of economic growth in developing countries and should address world economic problems practically, instead of remaining a mere slogan interspersed now and again by half-measures aimed more at placating genuine concerns of the South than at evolving a workable long-term policy to bridge the ever-widening gap between the North and the South with immediate, medium-term and long-term solutions to the exasperating problems that plague most developing countries. The efforts of most developing economies are compromised by the consequences of unbridled protectionism, deteriorating commodity prices, acute debt problems, declining financial flows, poverty and unfavourable terms for the transfer of technology.

However, in the face of the unfair competition that continues to hold sway on the international trade scene, we should ensure, for example, that the provisions of the Lomé Convention that binds the European Economic Community with the Asian, Caribbean and Pacific group of countries are upheld in any multilateral trade negotiations. We in Mauritius are eager for a balanced outcome of the Uruguay Round and have therefore been extremely disappointed at the scant attention paid to the interests of the developing countries which are vulnerable to shifts in the world economic order.

The ongoing negotiations have turned out to be primarily a battle of wits and nerves among the developed countries. We have studied the latest proposals from Geneva with attention, and our frank reaction is one of consternation and dismay. What is proposed is a cataclysmic operation which calls for the system to be completely refounded, the structures that exist to be razed, and the groupings within which we conduct our foreign trade to be dismantled. What is suggested by the major negotiators is a change so convulsive that only the most resilient economies will emerge unscathed. Mauritius considers this situation to be most unfair, unjust and, above all, counter-productive, in the long run. Mauritius, which has an open economy banking on export-led growth, is in favour of free trade and liberalization of exchanges with due regard for the acquired rights of various groups of developing countries. We believe, however, that such change must come about through an orderly, evolutionary process that will give ample time for adaptation, rather than through external imposition which has little consideration for factors other than economic.

We therefore appeal to all contracting parties to strive earnestly for a conclusion of the Uruguay Round that will take into account the difficulties of the developing countries and the particular situation of small island States. Both the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the General Assembly have recognized the specificities of small island States and the attention that should be given to them in view of the special case they constitute in the interrelation of environment and development. These States are characterized by their limited size in relation to the length of their coastline, limited natural resources, relative geographical isolation, extremely fragile and vulnerable ecosystem and a vast expanse of seas forming part of their territorial limits. For small island nations the ocean and the coastal environment are hence of primary importance and constitute a basic development resource.

The record of the United Nations in the social and economic fields is a mixed one. Its contribution to global awareness and respect for human rights and democratic values is undisputed. The Rio and Vienna Conferences were landmarks of global cooperation, despite divergent perceptions on the strengthening of relevant institutions and adoption of concrete measures. Such cooperation could in our view be developed by maintaining a strong role for the Commission on Sustainable Development and by choosing a feasible and incremental approach to implementing the commitments made by Governments under Agenda 21. In this regard, we look forward to the fruitful preparations for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and its successful outcome in Barbados next year, as the first test case in the ongoing Rio process.

We also feel that the General Assembly should seriously consider establishing an intersessional mechanism to complete the work of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference. We, for our part, are as committed as any of those who have made the protection of the global environment their *leitmotif*. We have ratified the Climate Change Convention, the Biodiversity Convention, the Montreal Protocol and the Basel and the Bamako Conventions, among other instruments. Our concern is to safeguard the world and ensure the well-being of those who live in it.

Let me pursue my thoughts on participation by small States in international life by calling attention to the fact that in a few weeks Mauritius will have the honour to host the fifth Summit of French-speaking Countries and by saying a few words about the two principal themes that will be addressed by Heads of State or Government of countries that share the use of the French language: human rights and development; and unity in diversity. Those timely questions illustrate our concerns at a time when the world is undergoing profound change and when most of our countries continue to face challenges of development. My country wants to make its own contribution, however modest, to the thought of the Frenchspeaking world and the rest of the international community so that mankind may see - based on the example of Mauritius - that peaceful coexistence in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic culture is no mere Utopian idea. I wish to thank the Secretary-General, a great friend of the French-speaking world, for having agreed, despite his weighty responsibilities, to honour us with his presence at a Summit

that will bring together, at the highest level, delegations from 47 countries and from all continents.

As members will appreciate, we small States are nevertheless doing our best to make our share of contributions in order to bequeath to future generations an environmentally clean world, a world free of want, a world free of war, a world where peace and harmony will prevail. Can we expect the same from those with mightier resources?