



**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,  
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Global Agenda Forum on “The Role of the United Nations  
in Mainaining International**





frequent use of veto. As the Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali observed, 127 wars erupted during the first fifty years of the United Nations' existence. The attributes "powerless" or "irrelevant" are, by no means, new additions into the UN word list.

## UN SECURITY MACHINERY

The end of the Cold War brought a new promise for the world organization. Some spoke of a renaissance, especially in the security area. The optimism about finally putting the system of collective security into work was underpinned by the authorization of the Operation Desert Storm in the Persian Gulf in 1991. It soon became apparent, however, that the post-Cold War reality would be more complex. Intrastate conflicts, fuelled by separatism, nationalism, in which civilians were increasingly the primary victims, proliferated. The United Nations had before it the enormous task of dealing with these military and humanitarian emergencies, and it was largely unequipped and unprepared.

Although not originally envisioned in the Charter, the traditional UN involvement with respect to peace and security have been its peacekeeping operations. Known widely as "blue helmets," United Nations peacekeepers monitor ceasefires, patrol buffer zones between hostile parties, and help defuse local conflicts. The first peacekeeping operation was in 1948 UN Truce Supervisire(y)20( )-9w03



range of global issues, elects members to United Nations' bodies, allocates funds from the budget. It is the only principle organ of the Organization in which all the Member States are represented and participate on an equal basis, that is one vote per Member State. Currently, there are 191 Member States. It provides the membership with a forum to articulate their positions, air their grievances, find consensus and engage in diplomatic exchange. The General Assembly has, throughout its history, considered situations which have not yet developed into a conflict but have such a potential, disputes between nations, breaches of peace, or acts of aggression, violations of territorial integrity or political independence, colonialism, or self-determination.

Its decisions in respect to resolving disputes and conflicts are, albeit, not binding and serve merely as recommendations. They usually take the form of an appeal for peaceful settlement and of encouragement of conciliatory policy to relieve tensions. They may contain concrete proposals for specific action and set forward objectives, ask the parties to the dispute to take necessary steps to overcome the friction, request dialogue and negotiations. The General Assembly issues formal statements expressing disagreement or denunciations of specific situations of conflict, declaring hope that the solution can be found in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter. The General Assembly also expresses satisfaction with the course of action taken by way of adopting resolutions to that effect.

The General Assembly can also recommend that an issue is considered by its standing subsidiary organ or an appointed commission, or the Secretary-General and his special envoys through their good offices. The General Assembly can further initiate investigations, inquiries, studies, or progress reports.

It can also contribute indirectly through its agenda related to economic, social, cultural, educational, and health issues, and through development of international law. The contemporary understanding of the concept of security has become much broader and by heeding these issues and allocating roles for the relevant members of the UN system, the General Assembly's role in creating peaceful and secure conditions throughout the world has become more ample.

The agenda of the General Assembly with respect to international peace and security includes areas such as disarmament, human rights, humanitarian assistance, democratization, environmental degradation, terrorism, HIV/AIDS, or international law. The General Assembly discusses and reviews, on an annual basis, complex political and security situations in different regions, such as the situation in Afghanistan, Central America, the Balkans, the Middle East, several agenda items deal with conflict in Africa. It reviews the implementation of a de-mining program. Disarmament agenda is considered in the International Security and Disarmament Committee and questions of decolonization, peacekeeping operations, or peaceful uses of outer space are taken up by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee. Both of these belong to the General Assembly's six main committees.

I would like to emphasize that the concept of security has evolved. Today, the maintenance of peace and security is closely inter-linked with socio-economic security, respect for human rights and democratic values, which the United Nations has taken upon itself to promote. The General



