Foreword

NO ONE who looks closely at the pattern of relations among nations can rationally question the necessity of international organization. Much of what each country needs can be obtained only in co-operation with others. What each country does within its borders may affect the lives not only of its neighbours but also of peoples on the other side of the globe. This reality, which expanding technology brings ever closer to home, obliges nations to turn to one another to discuss their problems.

There are countless institutions where people with common concerns exchange ideas, draw up plans, reach agreements. Many are successful because they benefit the special interests of limited groups of more-or-less like-minded nations or organizations brought together by regional, economic or social ties. To the extent that these institutions act without harming others, they may help not only their own members but also those outsiders whose activities they touch.

But there is an ever-growing part of human life where there can be no outsiders. The nuclear peril endangers all humanity. Economic links may be most extensive between countries of similar systems, but the earth’s resources are distributed so unequally that no single grouping can be self-sufficient. There may be different ideas about the content of human rights, but some standards are applicable to all human beings. It may be more comfortable to associate with those having the same political values, but the realities of coexistence oblige us to understand and to co-operate with all nations, not only our immediate friends.

It is this requirement for universality which the United Nations was established to serve. Yet the very diversity of its membership gives it the most difficult role of all. The United Nations must strive to limit and reverse the arms race; it must seek to resolve political conflicts which neighbours cannot settle; it should deal with economic imbalances that extend beyond single regions; it must endeavour to establish universal standards of law and justice in a world where many individuals cannot be sure of justice even at the local level.

However intractable the problems, the efforts to resolve them will continue as long as humanity has hope. The United Nations remains an expression of that hope. This latest volume of the Yearbook of the United Nations offers a continuing record of those efforts.

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