We live in a time of rapid change, marked by recurrent crises and upheavals. This volatility lends further urgency to the need to employ international machinery to maintain peace and security, promote justice, encourage respect for human rights and accelerate economic and social development. The world’s response to this need is described in the working of the United Nations.

No single year can furnish conclusive evidence of either the success or the failure of the response. All it can record is the continuity and the dynamism of an enterprise which covers the entire spectrum of collective concerns, some of them perennial, others relatively transitory but no less pressing. As the United Nations is not a world government, it can impose no solutions of its own and achieve no spectacular, quick results. Its principal instrument is multilateral negotiations; its main aim to secure agreements on how nations can jointly solve the complex problems confronting them all.

The experiences of 1982 recounted in the Yearbook of the United Nations indicate the efforts made to serve the great ideals of the Charter. A strong focus was maintained on all the objectives—political, economic, social and humanitarian—essential for creating conditions of stability and well-being for all peoples. The task of defining these common ends and spelling out the means of their attainment acquires added significance against the discouraging background of parochial attitudes and unilateralist trends. Perseverance in this task is the essence of the strategy to counter the degeneration of international life. There is no other way to avert anarchy and no other means to build and fortify the unifying sense of common interests which can lead to a brighter future for humanity.

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