

Foreword

THE YEAR 1990 MARKED A WATERSHED in United Nations history, with the end of the cold war signalling a significant opportunity for the Organization to tackle new tasks and fresh challenges, some unprecedented.

Among the year's historic achievements was the attainment of Namibia's independence, which had a positive impact on the situation in South Africa, where some progress was made towards dismantling the apartheid system. In Central America, United Nations involvement was instrumental in leading the countries of the region towards peace. After years of upheaval, the parties in Cambodia accepted a framework for a settlement drawn up by the five permanent members of the Security Council. The General Assembly devoted a special session to international co-operation on issues related to narcotic drugs, and another to the discussion of global economic issues. Among other highlights on the United Nations agenda during the year were the World Summit for Children, attended by leaders from 159 countries, the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, and the Second World Climate Conference.

At the same time, new problems arose, as the Security Council was called upon to deal with the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. Tension and violence also escalated in the Israeli-occupied territories, and developments in the Horn of Africa and western Africa led to unprecedented increases in refugees and displaced persons. The Organization also faced new obstacles to a thriving world economy, based on deceleration and the need to transform and integrate Eastern European societies into the global trading and financial systems.

Having been able to contribute to solutions to some long-standing conflicts and pressing problems on the international agenda made this, my last year as Secretary-General of the United Nations, a particularly rewarding one. Yet many unmet challenges remain as the Organization moves towards a new millennium. I extend my best wishes to my successors as Secretary-General as they rise to the challenges of this important period in the history of the United Nations.



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