

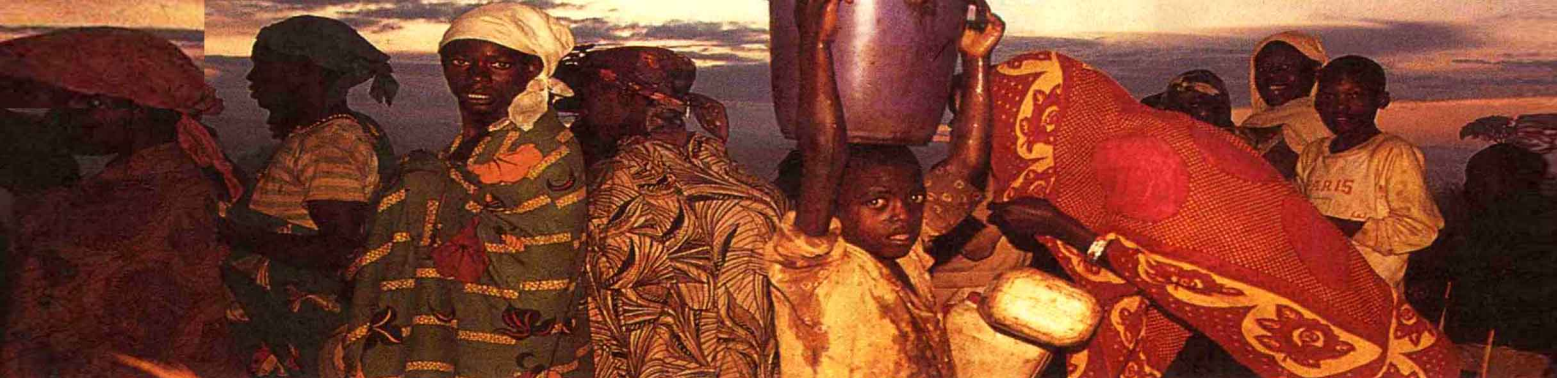


# *A Vision of Hope*

*The Fiftieth Anniversary  
of the United Nations*







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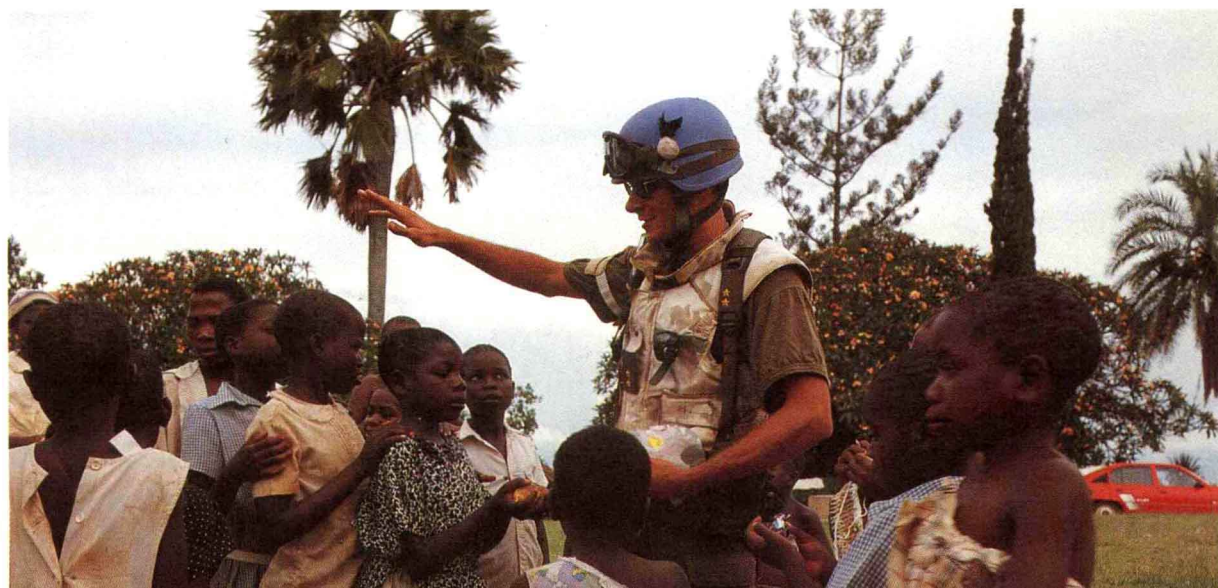
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# *A Vision of Hope*

## *The Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations*

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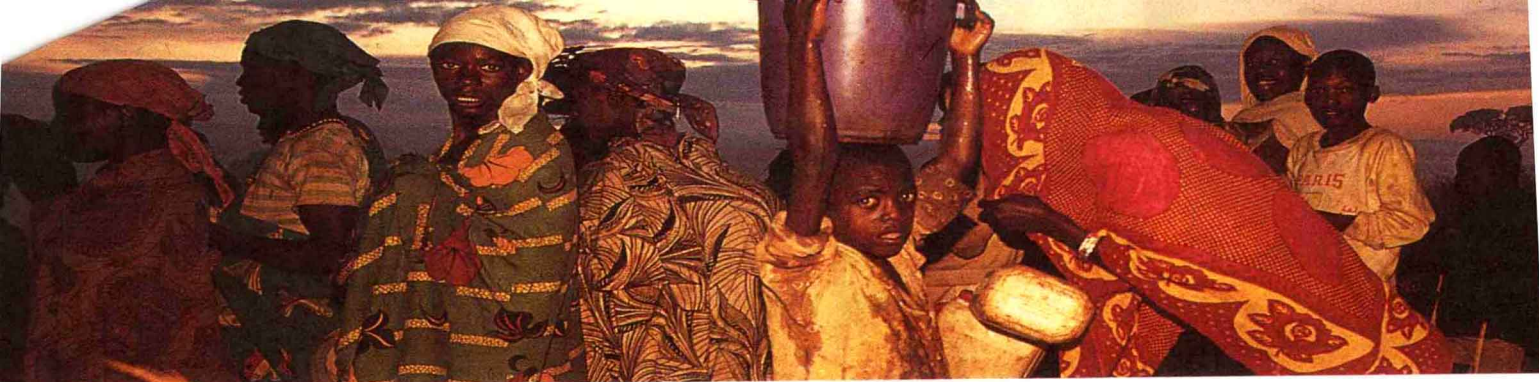
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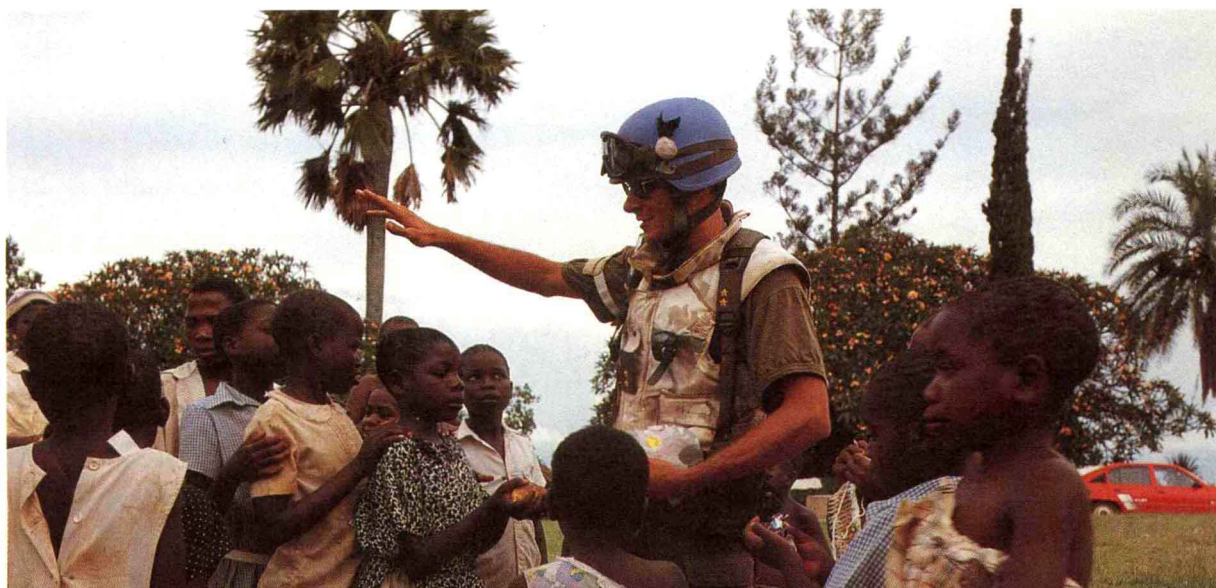
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# Introduction



**His Excellency Boutros Boutros-Ghali**  
*United Nations Secretary-General*

**H**alf a century ago, delegates from 50 states gathered together to give birth to the world Organization, the United Nations.

Since then, many critical ideas and events have altered the shape of international relations. The 50th Anniversary could hardly have come at a more appropriate time. For an organization going through a time of great change and momentous challenge, it offers an opportunity to celebrate achievements, review lessons of the past and chart a new course for the future.

There is one important aspect of the anniversary which I believe is especially important: improving public awareness of the UN, building a wider constituency and demonstrating the system's continued relevance in the years to come.

*A Vision of Hope*, informing its audience of the work of the UN towards peace, development and democratization, is a valuable contribution to promoting continued and enlarged understanding and support for the Organization.



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**A**s the world approaches the end of the twentieth century, we are witnessing the development of technologies that can meet any kind of human want and demand for those who have the resources.

However, for the greater part of the world, problems such as poverty and environmental devastation continue to worsen.

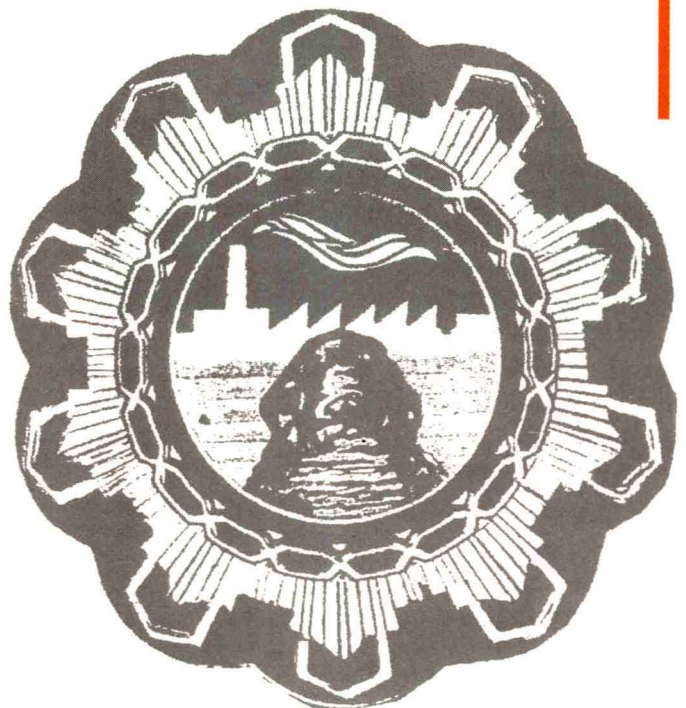
Recognizing that business has become one of the most dominant institutions of the modern world, it is clear that business has a responsibility to assist in bringing about the changes necessary to reverse global environmental and social degradation.

To bring about these changes we must promote international dialogue, understanding and cooperation between all sectors of society. This means putting people first - giving people a voice and a stake in their own future. It is only in this way that advances can be made for the development and future of all humankind.

After all, it is up to us to build a better tomorrow for our children by creating a safer world today.

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# Foreword



**Gillian Martin Sorensen**  
*Under-Secretary-General  
Special Adviser to the Secretary-  
General for Public Policy*

**T**he 50th Anniversary of the United Nations, a historic moment in the life of the Organization, offers an opportunity to reflect on the UN's past and consider its future. It is a moment to take pride in the UN's achievements and build upon its strengths as well as to acknowledge its flaws and learn from its failures. In this sense, 1995 is a defining moment for the Organization.

Though peacekeeping draws the lion's share of media attention, the greater efforts of the UN go to development, disarmament, democratization, humanitarian and refugee work, environmental action, human rights, health and family planning. For that reason, we welcome *A Vision of Hope* which gives a thoughtful overview of this broad agenda. It makes vivid and compelling the dire needs of so many and brings home to the reader the real work of the UN as it saves lives, changes lives and offers hope and opportunity to millions.

The UN reflects the will of its Member States. When that will is clear and united the UN is strengthened and possibilities for a better world are real. *A Vision of Hope* adds to the analysis that will renew and reinforce the UN, convey a greater understanding of its work and assist it to become more effective in its next half century.



# *A Sense of Proportion*



*The United Nations headquarters in New York.*



*~ shaping a credible strategy*



© Paul Smith/Panos

- *Changing perspectives*
- *New attitudes*
- *Successes and failures*
- *The United Nations' future*

**F**ifty years is two generations. And two generations is long enough to measure whether there has been a substantial change of direction in how mankind orders its affairs. It is clear that there has. We have been spared a Third World War. The change has affected not only war and peace, but also society's attitude to poverty, economic progress, its habitats, and women and children. In all, there have been strides forward that at the time of the ending of the Second World War seemed barely conceivable.

Yet we have clearly not learned one thing – a sense of proportion.

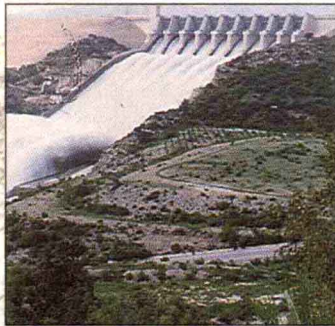
We are too arbitrary in our measurement of suffering, too beholden to early prejudices and too easily manipulated by the exaggerated and relentless, but fickle, eye of television. The danger is cumulative. As we are fed a random diet of suffering, based on misleading criteria for what is most important, we lose over time not only our discernment but our confidence in our ability to set intelligent priorities.

Strangely, we make the same mistake with successes as with failures. Look at this recent comment of the oft-quoted economist, Robert Heilbroner. The Western world, he says, 'is experiencing the startled realization that the quality of life is worsening – that people who are three or five or ten times richer than their grandparents do not seem to be three or five or ten times happier or more content or more richly developed as human beings'.

But is this not, in large part, because we are fed selective information, by both media and politicians,



# Defending the Economic Frontiers of Pakistan



**Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA)** has been a source of strength for the country's economy through its pioneering work in developing water and electric power sources. Within a period of 10 years, **WAPDA** has been involved in the construction of Tarbela, the world's largest earth and rock filled dam, spanning the mighty Indus River; Mangla dam; eight inter-river link canals, five barrages and a syphon involving one of the largest civil engineering works ever undertaken.

In 1947 when Pakistan came into existence, total electric power generation capacity amounted to around 30 megawatts (MWs). This

increased to 119 MWs in 1959 when **WAPDA** took over the country's power system. Today, electricity production capacity stands at about 10,000 MWs in the hydro sector and over 5,000 MWs in the thermal sector.

**WAPDA's** vast nationwide integrated transmission and distribution network caters for the needs of 8.7 million domestic, industrial and agricultural consumers, including nearly 52,500 villages.

In the water sector, the Tarbela and Mangla dams, with their massive storage capacity, provide water through the world's largest irrigation system. Over 80,000 hectares of waterlogged and saline areas of land

are being reclaimed annually.

**WAPDA** provides drainage infrastructure to nearly 6 million hectares and is currently implementing a drainage scheme involving another 2.5 million hectares, including a substantial scheme for the Left Bank Outfall Drain Project (LBOD). An equally ambitious project for the right bank of the River Indus is also being undertaken.

**WAPDA congratulates the United Nations on its 50th Anniversary and hopes that it will continue to play a positive role in future world affairs, encouraging cooperation among the nations of the world to foster universal peace and progress.**



**Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority**

Wapda House, Shahrah-e-Quaid-e-Azam, Lahore 54000, Pakistan.



# *“a flimsy reckoning of mankind’s achievements”*

that makes us more aware of our failures than our successes? Are we really living, for example, in a more environmentally degraded world than our grandparents, whose industrial cities imposed no controls at all on industrial effluents? And are we not living longer and with less physical suffering too?

For example, Britain is regarded, by some, as hobbled by an antique industrial structure, an imperial nostalgia and a sharp lack of a modern day work ethic. Yet figures published by the Central Statistical Office in January 1994 show that real disposable income – cash left over after taxes, National Insurance and pension contributions – was almost 80 per cent higher than in 1971 and life expectancy is increasing by about two years every decade.

Nowhere is this flimsy reckoning of mankind’s achievements more apparent than the way the inhabitants of the wealthy countries of Europe, North America and Japan perceive the rest of the world – the so-called developing countries – which are widely caricatured as poverty-stricken disaster zones. For the overwhelming majority of the Third World most of it is just plain nonsense.

In reality, in little more than a generation average real incomes in the Third World have more than doubled; child death rates have been more than halved; malnutrition rates have fallen by 30 per cent; life expectancy has increased by about a third; the proportion of children enrolled in primary school has risen from less than a half to more than three-quarters; and the percentage of rural families with access to safe water has risen from less than

10 per cent to more than 60 per cent. The proportion of couples using modern contraceptives has risen from almost nothing to more than 50 per cent – in China it is 72 per cent and Brazil 66 per cent. Average family size is falling in almost every country.

Only a short 70 years ago, 20 years before the founding of the United Nations, child death rates in the cities of the industrialized world were higher than the average for Africa today. In 1990, the UN Children Fund’s (UNICEF) World Summit for Children set a target of reducing child death rates to 70 per 1,000 births in all countries by the end of the century. Already, only five years into this timetable, well over half of the developing countries have reached it. In the 1960s, the under-five mortality rate in Europe was higher than it is in most of South America today.

Ignorance of what progress has been made extends right up to the highest levels of policy-making. If the quality of life can be improved so rapidly, how is it that Western aid agencies allocate less than 10 per cent of their expenditure to meeting the most pressing needs of the poorest – primary health care and education, clean water, safe sanitation and family planning? Developing countries themselves, too, are often just as culpable. They spend only 10 per cent of their budgets on these basics.

We lack a sense of proportion about either success or failure. If only we could face facts rather than accepting so glibly the misleading interpretations others choose to feed us, how much more productive – and happier – we would probably be.



However, it is not just on matters of social and economic development that we too often see the world through a glass darkly. War and peace preoccupy us seemingly more than ever despite the ringing down of the Iron Curtain and the ending of the Cold War.

Countless human beings have been killed in war from 1945, the end of what North Americans, Europeans and the Japanese like to call 'the last war', until the close of the Cold War.

If a massacre on this scale were to result from berserk technology, from a new strain of the plague or from the despotism of a ruthless tyrant, the global flood of human despair and outrage would be incalculable.

So why so much agitated concern in 1995? The world is not worse than it has been; it is probably better. Despite the headlines, we are not killing at Cold War rates. To read the forebodings of the politicians and pundits is to be plunged into the depths of despondency. The world, they appear to say, is spinning out of control.

It is simply not so. The world we live in today, despite Yugoslavia, Somalia, Cambodia, Angola, Afghanistan, Rwanda, Georgia, Tajikistan and Chechnya, has probably rarely, if ever, been so peaceful. Since the waning of the misnamed Cold War, which stirred up hot proxy wars all over the place, the number of conflicts has been on a steady decline. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the number of wars in 1987 was 36; in 1988, 33; in 1989, 32; in 1990, 31; in 1991, 30; and in 1992, 1993 and 1994, down to 27.

The majority of the big 'post-war' killers were the direct consequence of communist-capitalist confrontation – Korea, Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Afghanistan, Ethiopia-Somalia, to mention only the principal ones. Added to these there were the great anti-colonial wars, Algeria, Kenya, Cyprus, Rhodesia and, long before they became Cold War conflicts, Indo-China, Angola and Mozambique.

There were the big inter-state wars – Israel versus the Arabs, Pakistan versus India, Iran versus Iraq, and Iraq versus Kuwait and the rest of the world.

Finally, as there still are, there were numerous ethnic or tribal wars.

The Cold War is over. The colonial era is over. In 1994 peace was made between Israel and the Palestinians and amongst black and white in South Africa. Peace also came to Northern Ireland. Indeed, right now there are no all-out wars between nations. What then has brought about this awful sense of gloom that pervades the political discourse?

*“we look at  
problems  
rather  
than shield  
our eyes”*

Our unnecessarily pessimistic reading of the state of the world reveals a positive aspect – these days we look at problems rather than shield our eyes.

One only has to go back to the great Irish famine of the 1840s, which was effectively brushed under the carpet by official policy-makers. Yet famine today is televised worldwide and scarcely anyone feels unmoved.

It is our perspective, our sense of responsibility and our ability to care that have changed most. And that alone is one of the big achievements of our age. We are members of feeling societies. The question today is how best to mobilize those feelings, where best to direct them and what tools to use. At the same time we have to be aware that often there are no speedy solutions, that persistence is often the most important of virtues and that results or success can come from the most unlikely quarter.





*In little more than a generation, child death rates in the developing world have been halved. A child is vaccinated against meningitis in Mali.*

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