

Shah Salahuddin

THE UNITED NATIONS AND DECOLONIZATION : AN APPRISAL*

One of the spectacular developments in the contemporary history is the emergence of 'national self-assertion' and independence among the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America that mark the transition from the old world of colonial empires to today's community of sovereign independent nations. During the last four decades since the signing of the UN Charter in San Francisco on 26 June 1945, a great deal has been accomplished toward decolonization and the UN played a central role in the process. Emerging in the wake of history's most disastrous war, the UN has been unique in its hopes, and potential ; it has weathered many storms and achieved far more than many of its critics would recognize.

About 750 million people were living in dependent territories at the end of the Second World War in 1945 but fewer than 3 million people are now living in dependent territories mainly in southern Africa, Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean.¹ Since the establishment of the UN more than 75 former dependent territories have become members of the world body and active participants in the international system. "These nation-states acquired a growingly significant role as an actor within the United Nations and outside of all proportion

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1. *United Nations and Decolonization*, United Nations, New York, 1984, pp 4-5.

to their economic and military power. The cause seems to lie not so much in the strength of their number, however important, as in their creative response to the new international environment."²

In this historic development, the UN has played a decisive role by encouraging the aspirations of dependent peoples and accelerating the process of independence. From the outset the UN served as a catalyst for decolonization. Though the process started following the creation of the League of Nations in 1919 with its provision of the mandatory system, the establishment of the Trusteeship Council as one of the principal six organs of the United Nations added operational momentum to the whole process. The most important visible impact is manifest in the political scene with growing increase in the number of UN member states which has more than trippled from 51 in 1945 to 159 in 1984 representing 98% of the world population. The UN in real sense represents now the world community. The developing countries now constitute the overwhelming majority in the General Assembly. The organization has been transformed by the influx of former colonies that now seek to use the United Nations as a vehicle for reordering international economic, social and political relationship.

The year 1985 marks the observance of the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations which also coincides with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. In view of this, the paper attempts to evaluate the progress achieved during the period in the process of decolonization particularly in the implementation of the Declaration during the past 25 years, inquire into the remnants of colonialism, suggest ways for elimination of colonialism in real terms and finally focus light on our country's position on the subject.

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2. M. Shamsul Huq, *The First Osmany Memorial Lecture* delivered at the presentation ceremony of the BCS (Foreign Affairs) Officers (1984 Batch), organized by the Foreign Affairs Training Institute, Ministry of Foreign Affairs at Dhaka on 19 August, 1985.

From Charter to Declaration on Decolonization : 1945-1959

Trusteeship: Road to Freedom

The decolonization process drew UN support from the very inception of the United Nations. One of the four principal purposes of the United Nations under article I of the Charter is "to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and *self-determination of peoples*, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace" (emphasis added). It encouraged the growing determination of peoples under colonial rule to gain their freedom and independence. The Charter which came into force on 24 October 1945 contains three Chapters—XI, XII and XIII dealing with colonial territories. Chapter XI and XII provide for the implementation of international Trusteeship system and set out quite specifically the obligation of the member states responsible for the administration of Trust territories:

Under Chapter XII of the Charter the United Nations provided for an International Trusteeship system for the supervision of Trust territories placed under it by separate agreements with states administering them. The system was applied to three kinds of territories viz, (i) territories then held under Mandates established by the League of Nations after the World War I. (ii) territories detached from enemy states as a result of the World War II and (iii) territories voluntarily placed under the system by states responsible for their administration. The primary objective of the system was the promotion of political, economic and social advancement of the trust territories and their progressive development towards self-government of independence. A Trusteeship Council was established as one of the six principal organs of the UN as a mechanism to help the process of decolonization whose task is to assist the General Assembly in supervising the administration of all trust territories except for those designated as "strategic areas for which the ultimate responsibility rests with the Security Council". In the early years of the UN eleven trust territories were placed under the Trusteeship system: Togoland

(French) ; Togoland (British) ; Cameroons (French) ; Cameroons (British) ; Tanganyika (British) ; Ruanda-Urundi (Belgium) ; Western Samoa (New Zealand) ; Fauru (Australia) ; Papua New Guinea (Australia) ; Somaliland (Italian). The eleventh—the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (Micronesia), the Marianas (except Guam) and the Carolines is the strategic Trust Territory administered by the United States under the agreement approved by the Security Council in 1947.

By 1981, all except the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands had achieved independence either as independent state or united with the neighbouring sovereign country to constitute independent states which are follows.

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| Togoland | — United with the Gold Coast (Colony and Protectorate), a non-self-governing territory administered by the United Kingdom, in 1957 to form Ghana |
| Somaliland | — United with British Somaliland Protectorate in 1960 to form Somalia |
| Togoland | — Became independent as Togo in 1960 |
| Cameroons | — Became independent as Cameroon in 1960 |
| Cameroons | — The northern part of the Trust Territory joined the Federation of Nigeria on 1 June 1961 and the southern part joined the Republic of Cameroon on 1 October 1961. |
| Tanganyika | — Became independent in 1961 (in 1974, Tanganyika and the former Protectorate of Zanzibar, which had become independent in 1963, united as a single state under the name of the United Republic of Tanzania) |
| Ruanda-Urundi | — Voted to divide into the two sovereign states of Rwanda and Burundi in 1962 |
| Western Samoa | — Became independent as Samoa in 1962 |

- Nauru — Became independent in 1968
- New Guinea — United with the non-self-governing territory of Papua, also administered by Australia, to become the independent State of Papua New Guinea in 1975.

With the achievements of independence by these territories there has been marked decline in Council's activities. "The UN Trusteeship system has played a crucial role in the progressive disintegration of the age old European Empires."³ With the diminishing responsibility of the Trusteeship Council it was greatly overshadowed by a Special Committee of the General Assembly known after 1963 as the Committee of 24. However there could be no dispute that the United Nations Trusteeship system has quickened the transition from imperial control to independence with relatively little friction.

Independence of the Non-Self-Govering Territories

Charter XI of the United Nations contains the declaration regarding non-self-governing territories and deal with dependent territories in general not brought into the Trusteeship system. Charter XI containing Declaration Regarding Non-self-governing territory heralds a major advance going beyond any previous international agreements on the question and set out the obligations of United Nations member states administering all dependent territories. Under Article 73 (P) states possessing non-self-governing territories were obliged to transmit to the Secretary General information on economic, social and educational conditions in the territories for which they were responsible. The Assembly eventually widened the Committee's terms of reference to include the examination of political and constitutional information and urged administering members to provide such information. A special committee on information from Non-self-governing territories was charged with

3. Sakti Mukherjee, and Indrani Mukherjee, *International Organization*, The World Press Limited. Calcutta 1979, P. 168.

examining the information submitted under Article 73 (e) and with recommendations to the Assembly whose functions were taken over by the Committee of 24.

Since the end of the Second World War pressing demand for freedom from colonial domination has swept all over the globe. In 1946, eight member states—Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States—enumerated the territories under their administration which they considered to be non-self-governing and undertook to send information on them to the United Nations. In all the total number of non-self-governing territories that is, the colonies and dependencies of the colonial powers amounted to 74 of which eight became independent in the period 1946-1959.

By 1960 the decolonization campaign in and outside the UN was going on in full swing. Although some 30 trust and non-self-governing territories had attained self-government or independence, 80 million people still remained in colonial status increasingly suppressed by force in their struggle for freedom to determine their own future. In an effort to speed up the process of decolonization considering the important role of the United Nations in assisting the movement for independence in trust and non-self-governing territories and recognizing that the peoples of the world ardently desire the end of colonialism in all its manifestations, the UN on 14 December 1960, proclaimed, "by the adoption by the General Assembly, by a vote of 89 to 0, with 9 abstentions"⁴ of a historic Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Resolution 1514 (XV)).

4. The United States abstained in the voting on this declaration, a position which resulted in widespread criticism in United States, as well as in the newly emergent countries. The United States' member of the General Assembly which considered the declaration in detail Senator Wayne Morse declared later that "but for... pressure from the British government the United States would have voted in favour of the resolution." *The United States in the United Nations: 1960-A Turning Point*, Supplementary Report, Committee on the Foreign Relations, US Senate, 87th Congress, 1st Session (Washington D.C. Government Printing Office, February, 1961, pp-20-21).

Declaration on Decolonization

The UN Declaration on Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples marked a revolutionary change in UN approach towards decolonization. It may not be over-statement to suggest that no other United Nations document, with possible exception of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has had greater impact around the world.

The 1960 Declaration states that:

1. "The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and co-operation.
2. All peoples have the right to self-determination ; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.
3. Inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence.
4. All armed action or repressive measures of all kinds directed against dependent peoples shall cease in order to enable them to exercise peacefully and freely their right to complete independence, and the integrity of their national territory shall be respected.
5. Immediate steps shall be taken, in trust and non-self-governing territories or all other territories which have not yet attained

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independence, to transfer all powers to the peoples of these territories, without any conditions or reservation, in accordance

with their freely expressed will and desire, without any distinction as to race, creed or colour, in order to enable them to enjoy complete independence and freedom.

6. Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.
7. All states shall observe faithfully and strictly the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the present Declaration on the basis of equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of all states and respect for the sovereign rights of all peoples and their territorial integrity..⁵

As stated by the Secretary-General: "The adoption of the Declaration was an act of conscience on the part of the international community. It was a clear affirmation by the General Assembly of the right of peoples under colonial domination to share fully in the benefits of the Charter of its determination to eradicate once and for all colonialism, which it saw as a major impediment to the achievement of world peace and genuine international cooperation."⁶

It was perhaps the beginning to reflect the direct concerns especially in regard to decolonization of the Afro-Asian Group which in the very year of the adoption of the Declaration increased from a membership of 30 to 46, including the 17 newly independent African states which unchained themselves from the shackles of colonialism. Their number increased from three independent states (Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia) in 1945 to 25 in 1960.

5. Excerpt from the UN "*Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*" adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 14 December, 1960, Resolution 1514 (XV).

6. The UN Publication : *The United Nations and Decolonization*, Department of Public Information, UN New York, 1980. p. 4.

It also marked a recognition to the historic Bandung Declaration as adopted by 27 Asian countries in 1955. At the same time it was an expression of world desire to accelerate the process of liberation of colonial peoples and accorded new hope of freedom and independence to millions who were fighting the war of liberation for their countries. The Declaration, still remains the standard for the achievement of independence by the remaining colonial peoples of the world.

Committee of 24 and subsequent development (1960-84).

A Special Committee on the situation with regard to the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was adopted by the General Assembly in 1961. More often referred as the Special Committee of 24, because until 1980 when its membership was enlarged to 25 the committee originally consisted of 17 member states and subsequently expanded to 24 in 1962, it successfully promoted the transition to independence of a number of colonies. In doing so, it has fulfilled two basic aims of the United Nations; (i) respect for the principles of self-determination and equal rights for all peoples, and (ii) promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In more than two and a half decade since the adoption of the Declaration on Decolonization, with great majority of the territories under colonial rule becoming independent, the world stands politically transformed.

The Special Committee on Decolonization of the United Nations as the main body concerned with the progress of all peoples under colonial rules towards self-determination and independence were deeply involved in the efforts to *bring about independence* in Southern Africa, particularly in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau prior to 1975 when liberation struggles were taking place. After the independence of these countries, the Special Committee concentrated its efforts on the situation in Southern

Rhodesia and Namibia as well as on small territories of the Pacific, Atlantic, the Mediterranean and in the Caribbean Sea. After the independence of Southern Rhodesia as the Republic of Zimbabwe in April 1980, Namibia remains a major decolonization problem today in Southern Africa. South Africa continues to refuse to withdraw from Namibia. The UN actions on the issue include the recognition of SWAPO (South West African People's Organization) in 1973 and the appointment of UN Commission for Namibia. The General Assembly adopted a "Programme of Action" and a "Plan of Action" in 1970 and 1980 respectively for full implementation of the Declaration and assigned the Special Committee with the task of examining the compliance of all states with the Declaration and other resolutions on decolonization and to intensify their efforts for complete elimination of colonialism—"in all its forms and manifestations without further delay". The Assembly, in particular called for action to assist the peoples of southern Africa in their struggle for self-determination and independence as the policy of apartheid and continued illegal occupation of Namibia "constitute a threat to international peace and security."

By an overwhelming majority vote in March 1981 the General Assembly called on the Security Council to impose mandatory sanctions against South Africa to compel her to comply with the UN resolutions and decisions on Namibia. In April 1981 a Security Council draft resolution in line with the Assembly resolution received a requisite vote but failed to be adopted due to negative votes of three permanent members (France, UK, US).

In furtherance of the objective of terminating South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia, the General Assembly has called upon all states to sever all relations with South Africa, and it has urged the Security Council to impose comprehensive mandatory sanctions against South Africa. In May 1983, the Security Council mandated the Secretary-General to consult with the parties concerned in order to secure speedy implementation of Council

resolution 435 (1978). The struggle for liberation of Namibia continues.

With regard to the smaller territories scattered across the oceans, the Assembly restated its view that questions of size, geographical isolation and limited resources should in no way delay the carrying out of the Declaration. In its consideration of the remaining colonial territories, the General Assembly has reaffirmed every year that the continuation of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations is incompatible with the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on decolonization and poses a serious threat to international peace and security.

Territories Yet to Achieve Independence

The United Nations contribution in the process of decolonization is one of its outstanding accomplishments, but many millions still live under the colonial rule and the UN continues its intensive efforts to help attain their liberation. Except East Timor, Western Sahara and Namibia, most of the territories who are yet to achieve independence are very small in size and population. The Cocos (Keeling Islands) under Australia is only 14 square miles with 569 population and Toklau with 12 square miles with 1,554 population. A list of territories with which the Special Committee on Decolonization is concerned (as of June 1984) is as follows :⁷

Territory	Administering Authority
Africa :	
Namibia	United Nations
Western Sahara	Spain
Asia and the Pacific :	
American Samoa	United States
East Timor	Portugal
Guam	United States

7. See. "The United Nations at Work For Decolonization" *Basic Facts About the United Nations*. United Nations New York, 1984. Chapter V. PP. V. 5.

Pitcairn	United Kingdom
Tokelau	New Zealand
Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands	United States
Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean and Mediterranean :	
Anguilla	United Kingdom
Bermuda	United Kingdom
British Virgin Islands	United Kingdom
Cayman Islands	United Kingdom
Falkland Islands (Malvinas)	United Kingdom
Gibraltar	United Kingdom
Montserrat	United Kingdom
St. Helena	United Kingdom
Turks and Caicos Islands	United Kingdom
United States Virgin Islands	United States

With the success of the work of the Special Committee, the list of colonial territories has now shortened. Majority of the remaining colonial territories are islands whose geographical isolation and the vast distances between islands are basic facts of life that can not be ignored. As such these territories has special problems requiring special solutions. Mr. C.P. Rabindranathan, representative of the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement in his statement in the Regional Seminar on Decolonization held at Port Moresby (4 to 7 March 1985) said that "each of the remaining territories on the list of the non-self-governing territories merited special attention. It was incumbent upon the administering powers concerned to make every effort to promote the genuine interests of the population of the territories, including a full process of political education, a balanced economic development and elimination of the presence of military base and facilities from those territories."⁸

8. UN General Assembly Paper A/AC, 109/821, 19 April 1985, Report of the Regional Seminar on the implementation of the declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples with respect to the remaining territories with which the special committee is concerned and dissemination of information on decolonization, held at Port Moresby from 4 to 7 march 1985,

In view of the prevalent situations in the smaller territories who are yet to be freed from the bondage of colonialism, it is strongly felt by the freedom loving people all over the world that the administering powers of these territories should not use them for their nuclear testing and dumping of nuclear waste and materials in the adjacent areas. They should launch intensified programmes of political education, facilitate a sustained growth of fragile economies of the colonial territories in order to promote their economic and financial viability, develop the culture and heritage of these indigenous people and expedite the cause of self-government by accelerating the process of local recruitment. The task of decolonization is incomplete without the liberation of the peoples as listed above. It must be mentioned that the most significant failure in the decolonization field was in the case of Namibia.

Pretoria could afford to ignore the decision of the UN Security Council and all the subsequent UN measures caring little for international public opinion because some of the western powers particularly the United States who are also permanent members of the Security Council continue to back the Pretoria regime, dictated primarily by their economic and political interest in South Africa. The UN mandatory sanctions could also not be implemented because of their intransigent attitude.

But with the current tide of 'anti-apartheid' public opinion in the United States and Europe, the western public opinion is progressively turning against Pretoria. The recent voting trend in the Security Council by the United Kingdom and France demonstrates their new tone on the issue of South Africa. The US administration in the face of world wide criticism and with new awakening from within the country against the policy of apartheid may also soon require to adopt shift in their policy approach.⁹

9. Under mounting domestic and external public opinion pressure President Reagan imposed sanction on US computer sales, export of nuclear technology and Bank loans to South Africa on 10 September, 1985. See. *Bangladesh Observer*, 11 September 1985. Although it remains to be followed up by further substantive measures and policy changes the sanction indicates a positive development in US policy towards South Africa,

Outside the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Organization of African Unity (OAU) and Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) condemned the Pretoria regime for illegal occupation of Namibia and urged their withdrawal. In the recently held extraordinary meeting of the Non-Aligned Co-ordination Bureau of Namibia (April 19-21, 1985, New Delhi), the member states have been urged for using their economic and political influence on western countries so that they put pressure on the government of South Africa for unconditional withdrawal of troops from Namibia. It is further worthwhile to mention that the UN Security Council on 21 September 1985 unanimously condemned Pretoria for using "the international territory of Namibia as a spring board for invasion and destabilization of Angola and demanded unconditional withdrawal of the invading forces and called for payment of compensation."¹⁰

International public opinion remains as strong as ever in support of Namibia's independence and wants that the United Nations and its specialized bodies should take appropriate political and economic measures for implementation of the Security Council Resolution 435 (1978).

Reflections on decolonization

Despite the above-mentioned achievements independent and objective inquiry into the realities of the present day world indicate a frustrating picture on the elimination of colonialism, racism, apartheid and alien domination. Tendencies are prevalent today for a more subtle and dubious form of neo-colonialism and foreign domination to assert itself particularly against newly independent states struggling to consolidate their hard-earned freedom. The newly emergent countries of the world have been striving to achieve equal opportunity in their development and be their own masters not only

10. *The Bangladesh Observer*, Dhaka, 22 September, 1985. p. 4

politically but also economically and culturally. The Secretary General of the United Nations Mr. Javier Pavez de Cuellar correctly observed when he wrote in 1984, "In the nearly four decades since the United Nations was founded, the world has changed greatly and with it the United Nations itself This in turn has led to changing concept of the world priorities, to the search for new solutions to mankind's age-old problems and to new ways of

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of meeting basic human needs for food and shelter and for freedom from want and fear".¹¹ The importance of international co-operation to spur economic and social development has been increasingly recognized over the years. A peaceful and better world is the predominant aim of the world community today. Neo-colonialism as actually manifested around the world in various forms which is equally deleterious in its effect must not be allowed to take root. It is believed that among the essential elements that need to be considered for elimination of colonialism in all its manifestation, specific attention must be devoted to the following :

- (i) The seeds of neo-colonialism in the post-independence countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America are being securely planted and nurtured by vested colonial powers. Exploitation and abuse of resources have been causing an irreversible damage, especially to the interest of the weaker nations who through various ways are deprived of the control over their own resources. Efforts need to be organized and stepped up by the international community to end

11. Javier Pavez de Cuellar, 'Foreward', *Basic Facts About the United Nations*, Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, 1984, p. V.

- colonialism and neo-colonialism, to ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth and its proper utilization, and thus lay the foundation of an enduring peace and just world order.
- (ii) Since a large part of the world's population is living in hunger and poverty, collective efforts of the international community should be directed to conquer it. In the much desired New International Economic Order arrangement must be made for mutually beneficial cooperation, assistance and transfer of resources between the developed and developing countries to overcome poverty and achieve equality of opportunity for the establishment of a rational world order.
- (iii) A right to share in decision making process will be essential if the developing countries are to assume their proper share of responsibilities in international political and economic
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Wishful thinking or value judgement will not solve the problems of the rich and the poor countries of the world. What is required is a change in attitude.

affairs. It is this goal which nourishes the aspirations of developing countries for a new international order. Such a new international order as is imperative of relations among nations are to be placed on a new basis of mutual confidence, trust and cooperation.

- (iv) Besides, a new approach to defence and security policies is also indispensable. More arms do not make mankind safer. If a fraction of the money, manpower and research efforts presently devoted to military uses were diverted to development, the prospect of the Third World would look entirely different. "The World military spending this year will total 944 billion U.S. dollars following 810 billion dollars in 1983 and an estimated 875 billion in 1984."¹² This increasing trend of

12. *The Bangladesh Observer*, September 14, 1985.

Arms expenditure may in no way be allowed to continue as we aspire for a better world.

- (v) In almost every field of the world's present troubles the solution depends very largely on recognizing the mutuality in interest between the North and the South. Wishful thinking or value judgement will not solve the problems of the rich and the poor countries of the world. What is required is a change in attitude. This warrants understanding, commitment and solidarity among peoples and nations.

Bangladesh and decolonization

In the light of her experience, Bangladesh has taken an active interest on the question of decolonization and expressed her unequivocal support to the principles of self-determination and non-discrimination. Bangladesh is one of the countries which made a constitutional commitment to abide by the Charter of the United Nations. "She was aware that though rapid strides has been taken in the process of decolonization, the struggle for freedom was still not over. The struggle against the illegal occupation of territory by aggression, against the use of force, against the practice of racial discrimination and apartheid and the struggle for the realization of the inalienable rights of the downtrodden of this earth was not yet over."¹³

Bangladesh was convinced that the process of decolonization was irreversible and the struggle for freedom and independence was inexorable. Inspired by her abiding faith in the Charter of the United Nations and her commitment to UN General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) containing the historic Declaration on Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples Bangladesh has, time and again reiterated this principled stand both inside and outside the United Nations. Bangladesh has consistently pledged her

13. K.M. Kaiser, "A Voice Against Apartheid" *Bangladesh and the UN : A Decade of Commitment*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Govt. of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, 1984, p.15.

total support to the people of southern Africa in their struggle against the racial regime of Pretoria and recognized SWAPO as the sole representative of the people of Namibia. The government and people of Bangladesh have also lent their unstinted support to all the efforts for the restoration of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people and vacation of Israeli occupation forces from the Arab territories. "In a symbolic gesture recognizing the policy adopted by the young nation in support of the national liberation movement all over the world, the General Assembly in its resolution No. 3295 adopted on 13 December 1974, voted to include Bangladesh as a member of the Council for Namibia."¹⁴ As an active member of this Council, Bangladesh has all along insisted that the independence of Namibia must be achieved in accordance with the UN resolutions, in particular Security Council Resolutions 385 (1976) and 435 (1978). It may also be mentioned here that for her constructive role Bangladesh was one of the few countries invited to participate in the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) which would be stationed in Namibia for the implementation of the UN resolution during the transition period.

As one of the 11-Member Commonwealth Observer Group which had supervised the elections in Zimbabwe in 1980 Bangladesh made important contributions in the process of independence of Zimbabwe. Bangladesh also took active interest in the efforts of the UN Special Committee against apartheid and the Committee against Decolonization and her contribution during the first decade of her membership in the United Nations has been recognized by the international community as she had the privilege of being associated with various major international efforts for the eradication of racial discrimination and illegal occupation of foreign lands. Bangladesh's unanimous election in 1980 as the Chairman of the Security

14. Faruq A. Chowdhury, "Council For Namibia : Bangladesh on the side of the Oppressed". *Bangladesh and the UN : A Decade of Commitment*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1984. p. 23.

Council Committee on Arms Embargo on South Africa under resolution 418 bears testimony of the recognition of her firm and principled position on the issue. Bangladesh consistently expressed her solidarity with the cause of liberation movement and denounced the policy of apartheid. Foreign Minister Mr. Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury (then Adviser on Foreign Affairs to the President) in his address to the 39th Regular Session of the UN General Assembly on 1 Oct '84 said "Bangladesh is irrevocably committed to the cause of the oppressed peoples of Namibia and southern Africa and we renew our unstinted support to them in their legitimate struggle for freedom, liberty and human dignity".¹⁵

Bangladesh has been a staunch supporter of the world wide movement for restructuring the existing world order through her active participation in the movement in different forums including the UN agencies, the Group of 77 and the non-aligned movement. Bangladesh also lent her strong and active support to closer and more meaningful cooperation not only between the countries of the 'North' and 'South' but also between the countries of the 'South' themselves within the framework of ECDC and TCDC. "Our concern for world peace, security and development and our position on various international issues have been reflected in the speeches delivered at the United Nation General Assembly Sessions by the Heads of States, Heads of Government and Foreign Minister's of Bangladesh."¹⁶

Concluding Remarks

During the last four decades since the founding of the United Nations the most phenomenal change that characterises the modern

15. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury. Then Adviser for Foreign Affairs. "Foreward", *Bangladesh And the UN, A Decade of Commitment*.
16. See, *Ten Years of Bangladesh in the United Nations : Specehes of Heads of State, Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh at the General Assembly, 1974-1984*. Speech of Mr. Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury, Then Adviser for Foreign Affairs, at the 39th Regular Session of UN General Assembly, New York, 1 Oct '84.

world was the transformation of the geopolitical conditions of the newly independent sovereign states having their far-reaching impact on the international system. The process of decolonization which has transformed the world political map led to the emergence of the third world countries constituting the overwhelming majority in the UN General Assembly with its impact on the structure and functioning of the United Nations.

Although the United Nations is not a world government or a supranational state nor does it legislate that the nations must accept, over the decades it has been one place where representatives of most countries of the world great and small, rich and poor, strong and weak, following different political and social systems and cultures—are fully heard on a broad range of world issues. No doubt, the authority and effectiveness of the organization depended upon the collective will of the people and governments supporting it. As for decolonisation issue the United Nations during the last forty years of its existence has assisted a number of peoples in exercising their rights of self-determination and independence and its achievement in this field has been outstanding. The United Nations effort is focused now particularly on southern Africa, where millions still are denied of their rights for which the world body stands committed. A peaceful and better world is the paramount aim of the United Nations today.

In this world of paradoxes where arms race continues unabated, regional conflict tend to increase and man's belief in a common future is disillusioned in the anxieties of a divided present, "the United Nations remains the last hope of mankind in its search for peace, progress and development. In our slow journey from darkness to light, from chaos to order, the United Nations offers itself as a beacon of hope".¹⁷ The United Nations might have failed in many instances

17. President Hussain Muhammad Ershad's message for the book published in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the admission of Bangladesh to the United Nations, *Bangladesh And the UN: A Decade of Commitment*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1984.

to materialize the expectations and promises of its founders' hope that resulted in the current widespread lack of confidence in the United Nations' effectiveness, but this can not be contested that this organization worked as "a safety valve in times of tension and political crises and as an instrument for cooling of tempers".¹⁸ The alternative to it is the disastrous condition that may lead to the complete annihilation of mankind and its centuries old nourished civilization.

18. Paul Lusaka, President of the 39th Session of UN General Assembly, Quoted in, *The New Nation*, Dhaka 19 September, 1984.