

Editorial

ALTHOUGH THE PRINCIPAL international organization for dealing with world trade is GATT, many trading issues are dealt with in various other parts of the United Nations system; the General Assembly, ECOSOC, UNCTAD and also a number of the specialized agencies. It is therefore in the interest of more trade that the well-being of the United Nations should be promoted.

During the first forty years of the United Nations much has been learnt about the realities of inter-governmental cooperation and much has been achieved, although the highest hopes have not been realized. It is perhaps appropriate now to focus attention on some efforts that are being made to find ways in which the functioning of the Organization may be improved.

The Secretary-General himself has been calling for the proper implementation of General Assembly resolutions, which tend to proliferate and become repetitive. A report has been prepared¹ by a group of eleven past presidents of the General Assembly on the ways in which its procedure might be improved. There have also been thoughtful recommendations made by the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee² (embracing forty countries), which were commended by the Canadian delegate Mr. Lee in his address to the General Assembly on 9 December 1985, speaking on behalf of Canada and ten other developed countries.³

The principal reform suggested is that the General Assembly, the main committees and the other organs of the United Nations should be relieved of many days of tedious debate on subjects that have already been discussed on previous occasions, so as to leave time for constructive examination of a few important topics which would enable some consensus building to take place before a final vote on resolutions. Other matters should be dealt with in the specialized committees of the General Assembly. The number and duration of speeches should also be limited and in order to prepare for the future the next Assembly president should be nominated before the current session is over. Steps should also be taken

¹ General Assembly document A/40/377.

² "Strengthening the Role of the United Nations through Rationalization of Functional Modalities with Special Reference to the General Assembly", G.A. doc. A/40/726.

³ Australia, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden.

to prepare some plans at the global level with a view to their introduction in the year 2000.

The Asian-African committee has referred specifically to the group system for dealing with economic issues, stating:

This modality of negotiations which was initially conceived as being in the interest of the developing countries would now appear to have outlived its utility in the changing pattern of world economy and in the context that the premise on which the economic strategies of the sixties and the early seventies were forged have ceased to be valid.

The committee considers that the groups might be better regarded as forums for consultations rather than for forging common negotiating positions.

In this issue we also print a commentary on an outspoken report prepared by M. Bertrand of the UN Joint Inspection Unit that makes proposals for more fundamental reforms, and which particularly deserves detailed study.

In any system of world order, the European Community has a commanding role to play, not least because it has found the way in which nation states may cooperate effectively together. A far-reaching report on the contribution that the Community could make towards a more stable secure and equitable world has been written by Christopher Layton. This is the outcome of a joint study group organised by the Federal Trust for Education and Research in cooperation with the Wyndham Place and One World Trusts. The report, *One Europe: One World*, discusses the major threats now facing mankind—including nuclear extinction, ecological disasters, the dangers arising from tensions between rich and poor countries and the disintegration of world trade—and examines ways in which the Community could, with the help of other countries, tackle their root causes as well as their effects. We are grateful to the Federal Trust for the courtesy of being permitted to circulate this report as a special supplement to this issue of the Journal.