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Statement by M/EA in General Debate at 24th Session of UNGA -  
26 Sept. 1969

Madam President:

On behalf of the delegation of Ireland I would like to congratulate you warmly on your election to preside over the deliberations of this session of the General Assembly. We welcome the choice of a distinguished citizen of Liberia to fill that high office. Your many past contributions to the work of the United Nations guarantee that you will discharge the functions of the Presidency in a manner calculated to advance the goal enunciated in your opening address - to ensure that the Organization promote "peace, the welfare of all, and the effectiveness of the Charter as a whole".

My delegation would like at the same time to record our sincere regret at the death of the President of the twenty-third session of the Assembly. The Irish delegation admired the high talents of H.E. Dr. Emilio Arenales Catalan and the dedication he displayed as President despite serious illness; and were grieved that he should pass away at such an early age. Our sympathy goes out to the delegation of Guatemala.

Delegates are no doubt aware from my recent appearances before the Security Council and the General Committee that we in Ireland are gravely concerned about the situation in the North of Ireland. I shall speak on that. At this stage, Madam President, and since this is the first occasion on which I have the honour to address the Assembly on behalf of Ireland, I want to reiterate the strong commitment of my Government to the objectives and purposes of the Charter. That commitment has

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consistently informed our policies and attitudes within the United Nations. It shall continue to do so; and our aim shall continue to be to promote the vigour and efficacy of the Organisation.

My delegation, therefore, regrets that during the past twelve months, to quote the opening sentence of our distinguished Secretary-General in the introduction to his annual report, "the deterioration of the international situation which I noted in the introduction to the annual report last year has continued".

It was in June, 1968, that the Assembly, after a long and detailed discussion at the resumed twenty-second session, commended the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by an overwhelming majority. That is now a full fifteen months ago. It is thus a matter of concern that not only has the Treaty not yet become effective but that it has yet to be formally ratified by two of the three nuclear signatories, and that a substantial proportion of the other ratifications required for its entry into force have <sup>not</sup> been deposited.

There has, it is true, been one encouraging development in the field of nuclear non-proliferation in that the Treaty of Tlatelolco has received the requisite number of ratifications and that the Agency for the prohibition of nuclear weapons in Latin America has now been established. My delegation would like to congratulate the delegations of Latin America on this achievement. We hope that it will lead to others, and that it will, in particular, serve to accelerate ratification of the Non-Proliferation

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Treaty by many more States and, immediately, by the remaining two of the three nuclear signatories. In expressing this hope, we have especially in mind that the debates at the resumed twenty-second session revealed a considerable volume of opinion to the effect that the Treaty constitutes an indispensable first step towards further measures of nuclear disarmament. And the need for speed is all the more evident when we recall that eleven years have passed since the proposal for a non-proliferation treaty was first tabled by the Irish delegation under the leadership of Mr. Frank Aiken.

In this connection it is right to remind ourselves that it is not only an explicit function of the Assembly under Article II of the Charter to deal with disarmament but that article 26 implicitly enjoins on Member States to limit the use for armaments of the world's human and economic resources. The least that can be said is that the present position in that regard is most disappointing. The Secretary-General has pointed out that, whereas it was estimated in 1962 that total world expenditure for military purposes had reached the enormous figure of about \$120 billion per year, the rate today is estimated at about \$200 billion. It is not surprising that the Secretary-General should feel that, "even allowing for the increase in the price level, this inflation of military expenditure is both startling and depressing". Consequently the Irish delegation strongly approves the proposal by the Secretary-General that the decade of the 1970s., already designated as the Second Development

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Decade, should likewise be a Disarmament Decade. That the same decade should be dedicated simultaneously to these two purposes will serve to bring out the link between them in terms of the best use of economic and human resources.

The Irish delegation will continue to support the conclusion of a comprehensive test ban treaty and generally acceptable measures to ban chemical and biological means of warfare (CBW) and the spread of nuclear and other mass destruction weapons to the seabed.

The question of peace-keeping operations is again before the Assembly. Member States will be aware of the views expressed by the Irish delegation on this subject at earlier sessions and of our endeavours in recent years to provide for a reliable and satisfactory system of financing duly authorised peace-keeping operations. It is not necessary for me to detail now the many arguments in favour of such a system: the matter will come to be debated later in the Special Political Committee and in Plenary in connection with Item 35. Here I will confine myself to saying that my delegation has noted the remarks in paragraph 80 of the introduction to the Secretary-General's annual report about the uncertainty concerning the maintenance of the United Nations Force in Cyprus, the main current UN peace-keeping operation, because of the unsatisfactory nature of the financial arrangements. We have noted too the statements already made in the course of the General Debate by a number of speakers about the great importance in certain situations of a peace-keeping operation, and the necessity to put such operations on a proper footing.

The Irish people have watched with sadness and distress the continuation of the tragic conflict in Nigeria - a country with which Ireland has very close ties, stretching well back into

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the last century, through direct and continuing contacts between our two peoples. It is our hope that a just settlement of the problem will be speedily reached with the assistance of the Organization of African Unity. We most earnestly and urgently appeal to all concerned to strive, despite the political difficulties, to find ways of maintaining and indeed increasing the flow of international relief supplies so desperately needed.

This is the third Regular Session of the Assembly whose agenda contains an item on the situation in the Middle East arising out of the hostilities of June, 1967. That no substantial progress should have been made in resolving that situation is most disquieting, having regard to the possibility of a recrudescence of major hostilities in the area. In that event there would clearly be a risk of the Big Powers being drawn in for various reasons, including the traditional strategic importance of the Middle East. It is therefore discouraging that the Secretary-General should record a marked deterioration in the situation; and my Government noted with concern the anxious appeals he felt obliged to make in recent months for the exercise of restraint by the parties directly concerned and for the cessation of the many grave incidents which have unnecessarily exposed the safety of the Military Observers along the Suez Canal. As the Secretary-General has well said, the whole situation in the area creates "a crisis of effectiveness for the United Nations and for its Members". The Irish delegation sincerely hopes that the mission of the distinguished Special

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Representative of the Secretary-General in the Middle East, Ambassador Jarring, will bear fruit worthy of the patient and persistent efforts on which he has been engaged, and that the Big Four, who have been seconding these efforts for the past six months, will enable him to bring his mission to a successful conclusion at a very early date.

The Secretary-General's introduction calls attention to the particular problem of hijacking of commercial passenger aircraft. It is a problem to which no country can be indifferent and which is of special concern to all Member States operating international air services. We all know the great cost of operating regular air services and what a heavy financial burthen the disruption caused by the practice of piracy in the air can place on airlines, especially those of smaller countries, not to speak of the addition to the already heavy responsibility of airline pilots and crews. The Irish delegation therefore associates itself with the appeals made by the Secretary-General for a successful outcome to the efforts being made by the International Civil Aviation Organisation to remove this threat to reliable air communications and to the lives of innocent travellers.

A section of the Secretary-General's introduction which the Irish delegation finds of particular interest is that relating to the exercise of his good offices. We subscribe entirely to the statement that, against the background of earlier consideration

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of this point, "I have come to the clear conclusion that I am competent under the Charter to use my good offices". Indeed we feel that the legitimate role of the Secretary-General in this field is in some ways wider than is sometimes conceded.

I may recall here the view expressed by the Irish delegation on 28th September, 1967, that the Secretary-General should be entitled to appoint a Special Representative without necessarily seeking further authorisation. This continues to be our interpretation of the scope of Article 99. And in the same context I may say that my delegation is of the opinion that the good offices of the Secretary-General could be of very great value in giving effect to one of the main purposes of the United Nations. I have in mind the purpose set out in Article 1.4 of the Charter, which says that the United Nations should be "a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends". In that regard my delegation has noted with much interest the statement made here by the distinguished Foreign Minister of Sweden on 19th September, that at the present time the principal role of the United Nations as far as current conflicts are concerned is "to serve as a centre for the expression and formation of international opinion, to encourage and facilitate co-operation and agreement between the States concerned and to offer the formal framework for such co-operation and agreement".

During the fifteen years since my country became a Member of the United Nations Ireland has endeavoured by word and deed to prove her loyalty to the purposes and principles



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of the Charter. We have honoured the obligations of membership and we have striven to contribute to the attainment of the ends for which the Organisation was founded. And the basic purpose for which the UN was founded was and remains the preservation of peace.

We have not hitherto sought to bring before the United Nations in a formal manner our greatest political problem, the Partition of Ireland, a problem at once national and international.

In the detailed debate which took place in the Irish Parliament in July, 1946, on the question of seeking admission to the United Nations, it was agreed that whereas, under the Charter, membership would impose serious obligations, it would be wrong to look to the Organisation for national advantage only; and that it would be misleading to suggest that the United Nations would solve the vital problem of Ireland's national reunification. This was made clear. And our Parliament unanimously recommended the Government to seek admission because of our dedication to the purposes of the United Nations and because of the great potential of the Organisation for advancing the cause of peace and establishing a better world order.

We have ourselves sought to achieve reunification by means enjoined by the Charter through cooperation. We have not had, nor do we now have, any wish to try to achieve it by force. Nor would we have wished, without grave reason, to ventilate in this forum here the faults of the Belfast Administration or the acquiescence up to now of British

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Governments in those faults. We have had <sup>no</sup> expectation of reunion through a verdict on the part of the world community. Even if such a verdict were obtainable and enforceable, it could well create a situation in which some of our fellow-citizens in a united Ireland might feel embittered and alienated. We have had no desire to vitiate the spirit of co-operation which has begun to grow between the two parts of our divided country, or the amicable relations which have developed between the peoples of Ireland and Great Britain after centuries of strife and confrontation.

That we nevertheless addressed two requests to the United Nations in recent weeks in connection with this problem is due to the grave situation which developed in Northern Ireland through growing impatience and frustrations of the minority at the persistent denial to them of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is a situation which constitutes a real and present danger to the lives, homes and livelihood of a substantial number of Irish citizens in that area and a threat to the amicable relations with Britain to which I have just referred. But it still remains our earnest hope that the goal which the great majority of the Irish people ardently desire will be achieved by mutual consent.

My Government have sought to create an atmosphere of confidence and friendship between the two areas of Ireland, through economic and social co-operation. But this co-operation, although it undoubtedly improved the climate of opinion North and South, did not alter the basic economic and political disadvantages of the minority in the North. These disadvantages derive primarily from

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the institutionalized system of economic, political and social discrimination of which the minority have been victims for almost fifty years.

The immediate plight of the minority is our most urgent concern. But we are convinced that the heart of the matter lies in the Partition of Ireland, which originally brought about the political structure of Northern Ireland and gave the Unionist Party the degree of autonomous control which permitted them to discriminate against the minority.

The Government of Ireland Act of 1920, which established Northern Ireland - an Act of the British Parliament for which no Irish Member North or South voted - and the subsequent Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 radically altered the relationship between Britain and Ireland. Although the relationship between Britain and the now independent part of Ireland resulted in sovereign control by the Government at Dublin over Twenty-six of the Thirty-two Counties of our country - over three of the four historic provinces of Ireland and one-third of the fourth province, Ulster - the position of the Government in the Six North Eastern Counties remained one of subordination to Britain. The 1920 Act installed in power in the Six Counties a régime with tragic results, of which the whole world is now witness. The division of Ireland was a poor and unimaginative arrangement, which, like other similar arrangements before and since, contained within it the seeds of perpetual dissension and discontent.

Madam President, we believe that the division of Ireland and the present denial of human rights to the minority in the Six

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Counties are intimately inter-related; and until both issues are honourably resolved there can be no true and lasting peace. It must not be forgotten that the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, although responsible for the present situation, explicitly envisaged the reunification of Ireland. Indeed, when he formally opened the Northern Parliament in June, 1921, the late King George V of England expressed the hope that this step would prove to be no more than

"the prelude of the day in which the Irish people, North and South, under one Parliament or two, as those Parliaments may themselves decide, shall work together in common love for Ireland upon the sure foundation of mutual justice and respect."

It was a hope which reflected the conviction expressed some years earlier by the then British Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, that

"Ireland is a nation; not two nations, but one nation. There are few cases in history, and as a student of history in a humble way, I myself know none, of a nationality at once so distinct, so persistent, and so assimilative as the Irish."

I have already said, Madam President, that it is the policy of my Government to seek the reunification of Ireland by peaceful means. In so stating, I am but echoing what has often been said elsewhere by those qualified to speak for the Irish people, and most recently by our Prime Minister a few days ago. The unity we seek, he then declared, is not something forced but a free and genuine union of those living in Ireland, based on mutual respect

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and tolerance and guaranteed by a form or forms of government authority in Ireland providing for progressive improvement of social, economic and cultural life in a just and peaceful environment.

The United Ireland we desire is one in which there would be a scrupulously fair deal for all. Differences in political outlook or religious belief need not set people apart. They exist in most countries and are no barrier to effective and constructive co-operation. The real barriers are those created by fear, suspicion and intolerance.

Reiterating what the Prime Minister stated on that occasion, I may say that the events of the past few months have made it evident to all that, while disrupting the unity of Ireland, the 1920 devolution of powers has not provided a system of government acceptable as fair and just to very many of the people in Northern Ireland. The truth and validity of this assertion are amply demonstrated by a recent objective report. I refer, of course, to the report of the Commission appointed by the Belfast Administration and headed by the distinguished Scottish judge, Lord Cameron. The report makes clear the urgent necessity for change.

We are concerned that the grievances of so many of our fellow Irish men and women be quickly remedied and their fears set at rest. We also have a legitimate concern regarding the disposition to be made by the British Government in relation to the future administration of Northern Ireland. Our views on how peace and justice can be assured in our small island are relevant and entitled to be heard. Our direct interest in this matter has been recognised publicly by the British Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Wilson.

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Speaking at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in 1967, Mr. Wilson said: "I know, just as my predecessors, that no one would be happier than Great Britain if this problem is solved by agreement within the Emerald Isle. I am sure that I am speaking for everyone in expressing the hope that over the next few years we shall see an intensification of the process of coming together which has begun during the last three or four years." And, again, Mr. Wilson referred to "the real duty of all those in Northern and Southern Ireland, without propaganda and with a genuine desire to solve the problems, to get together and solve the Irish problem so that we can all express our warm blessing to them for solving it." These are generous sentiments. At the same time we must not overlook the fact that the ultimate responsibility for the present situation in Northern Ireland rests in London. The British Government have recognised this.

It is our earnest hope that the British Government will persevere in their determination to see that the necessary reforms in the North - the reforms which are required by the UN Charter - are speedily and irreversibly effected and that they will soon come to deal with the root cause. Because of our direct interest in these questions, it would be only natural that the British and Irish Governments, both Members of the United Nations, should consult and work together in the spirit of the Charter in order to arrive at a just and lasting solution.

If I have spoken at some length, Madam President, about the problem of Northern Ireland, the reason is that the Partition

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of our country, a historic unit, has been a constant - indeed a major - preoccupation of our people, whether at home or in the many lands in which great numbers of them now reside. That my Government have felt constrained to raise the matter formally now is due to the gravity which the situation has assumed in these last months, and especially in these last weeks. The question, we genuinely believe, is one which is a proper concern of the United Nations, involving as it does infringements of the principles of the Charter.

Before concluding, Madam President, I wish to say how deeply touched the Irish delegation was by the very friendly reference to our problem made by the distinguished Foreign Ministers of France and Iceland, two countries for which the Irish nation has a warm sympathy arising from ties of kinship and of intercourse extending over many centuries.

I conclude, Madam President, by expressing the most earnest hope that the deliberations of this session of the Assembly will be a source of encouragement and help to resolve their last outstanding problem between two close neighbours.