Tenth special session
Agenda item 8

GENERAL DEBATE

Letter dated 1 June 1978 from the Permanent Representative of Bolivia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

At the afternoon plenary meeting on Tuesday, 30 May 1978 (A/S-10/PV.9, p. 101) the Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations and Head of that country's delegation to the tenth special session of the General Assembly, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, made incorrect statements. I could have, in turn, replied, but preferred not to, not for lack of sound arguments, of which there are plenty, but in order not to strain the patience of the General Assembly and, particularly, not to become involved in an argument which might add a spirit of bitterness and mutual recrimination to the suspension of relations between Bolivia and Chile, which is far from my intention.

Nevertheless, I feel bound to inform you and, through you, the international community of the views of my Government with regard to the statements of the representative of Chile and to request you to have this letter distributed as a document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly under agenda item 8.

The representative of Chile referred first to Bolivia's having accepted "in general terms" his Government's original proposal; that was indeed correct. A proposal "in general terms" neither implies nor can constitute an accomplished fact, still less total unqualified acceptance that would pre-empt any further action, since in a matter of such importance, in which national sensitivities are so intimately involved any decision obviously required the agreement of the Bolivian people if it was to be final and valid.

The second point raised concerned the treaties in force between Bolivia and Chile and between Chile and Peru in connexion with which, as the speaker mentioned, there is a "complex problem". One of these certainly provides for what Peru has called the "specific interests" that it has at stake in any negotiation involving the territories that belonged to it until the war of 1879, a very small part of which was being offered to us on an exchange basis, although the necessary prior
consultations had not been carried out or acceptance of the proposed condominium been secured, which would mean that the Government of Chile was offering to exchange territories the transfer of which would require prior negotiations with a third party if it was to be regularized. Such regularization was not achieved during the negotiations.

Bolivia could not accept as valid an offer of that nature or continue negotiations based on such insecure and fragile foundations, particularly since reference was made in the over-all offer to territorial compensation not only for the sovereign access corridor, but also for the territorial sea and the 200-mile economic zone, even before the latter has been sanctioned by the convention still under consideration by the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea.

The prospects for a solution became more remote when the Peruvian reply was announced proposing a tripartite administration, which made it quite clear that the Government of Peru did not accept the Chilean formula. The Chilean Foreign Ministry rejected it outright without even considering to what extent it might lend itself to negotiation or be compatible with the new approach of peace, integration and development proposed by Bolivia.

It is only logical that this patently uncertain and elusive state of affairs should be disappointing to the people and Government of Bolivia.

It must also be pointed out that the people of Bolivia has been waiting patiently and peaceably for a hundred years in the hope that Chile would understand its situation and that such understanding would bring about a just and final solution. But it wants genuine negotiations on terms that will be of positive benefit to the countries of the area and Latin America in general.

It is natural that a people overwhelmed by neo-colonialist pillage - in addition to the dismemberment caused by the loss of its entire coastline of 400 kilometres, with an area of 150,000 square kilometres, after a typical war of conquest which caused such immense damage, years later, because of the unilateral diversion of the river Lauca - should feel that it had again been cheated and insulted, inasmuch as a merely symbolic reparation, amounting to no more than the tiny 10-kilometre strip of territory offered by Chile, was craftily filched from it.

The seeming dialogue proposed is merely the monologue of diktat with a view to a categorical "take it or leave it". That serves to show the world community how futile negotiations with no end or objective were. The outcome once again was, despite Bolivia's unvarying peaceful attitude, in its unfailing respect for the rules laid down by the United Nations Charter, that a solution to its fateful exclusion from access to the sea was again postponed.

This statement is not being made in any polemical spirit: its sole purpose is to place these facts on record on the occasion of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

I thank you for your attention to this letter.

(Signed) Mario ROLON ANAYA
Ambassador