Strengthening the United Nations

The United Nations (UN) came into being in 1945 at the end of World War II with the aim of ensuring pacific resolution to disputes between nations, to prevent disputes from escalating into war, to persuade opposing parties to use the negotiating table rather than the force of arms, and to help restore peace when conflict breaks out. The memory of the horrendous consequences of the Second World War were fresh when the UN Charter was drawn up, hence the preamble to the UN Charter was a fitting document whose opening paragraph read:

**WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED** to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.¹

President Obama also emphasized this aspect during his speech to the UN General Assembly on September 22, 2009 when he quoted President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the chief architect of the United Nations, “The structure of world peace cannot be the work of one man, or one party, or one nation….It cannot be a peace of large nations—or of small nations. It must be a peace which rests on cooperative effort of the whole world.”² The main purpose of the United Nations is to maintain peace and security around the world. Each member nation must play its part, working with and through the United Nations, to promote its ideals and to strengthen it further.
Since its inception, the United Nations has lived up to its Charter and fulfilled its mandate to a great extent; in the first six decades of its existence the UN, with the help of its different organizations, has carried out a very useful service to mankind and advanced freedom and human rights around the world. It has also made a tremendous impact on the lives of millions in poorer parts of the world by providing shelter, basic education, and critical health care and disease control.

The UN has participated in numerous peacekeeping operations right from the time of its creation, a role it continues to play even today. It has not only helped in preventing and resolving disputes and in peacekeeping between warring parties, but has also met many other challenges of global magnitude confronting the world. These include alleviating hunger and poverty; providing assistance in pandemics like HIV/AIDS and various other forms of diseases; resolving social, economic, and political injustices, and political exclusion on matters of cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity; resolving human rights abuses and the failure of nation-states to provide security and livelihood to its people; and providing succor at the time of natural calamities like cyclones, earthquakes, floods, droughts, and famines.

The United Nations member nations, conscious of their obligations and in their collective wisdom, drafted the Millennium Development Goals in September 2000. There are eight goals of pressing development challenges that have been identified to be implemented by 2015. These include eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, ensuring environmental sustainability, combating HIV/AIDS, controlling malaria and other diseases, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and creating a global partnership for development. All these challenges need global cooperation, with a central coordinating, controlling, and monitoring organization; the United Nations, obviously, is best suited to fulfill this role. It is also obvious that the UN requires the support of all the member nations to fulfill these tasks.

The security paradigm has altered very significantly since the end of the Cold War, and more so after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which has unleashed a new type of war, namely “terrorism and the fourth generation warfare” in which nonstate actors have created mayhem all around the world by their brutal and inhuman acts. In many cases their home government is unable to rein them in and at times it may even be complicit with them. Under such conditions of turmoil and insecurity the role and active involvement of the United Nations has