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Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

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Introduction

1. This is my seventh annual report on the work of the United Nations. Once again I take stock of what the Organization has done during the past year and how it has responded to the heavy demands upon it. The chapters of this report bear evidence of the ever-increasing number and scope of the tasks that the Organization performs in diverse areas such as peace and security, economic and social development, humanitarian assistance, international law, human rights and the environment. The Organization has made good progress in many areas, but in other important fields it will take more time to achieve its goals.

2. Undoubtedly, in the area of peace and security, it has been a trying year for the United Nations. The war in Iraq severely tested the principle of collective security and the resilience of the Organization. Rarely in its fifty-eight-year history have such dire forecasts been made about the United Nations. The United Nations will emerge strengthened if we make a measured appreciation of what happened, think about the sort of Organization we want in the future, and start making the necessary changes.

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Chapter I

Achieving peace and security

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Conflict prevention and peacemaking

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20. After almost three years of violence and confrontation, new hope for the resumption of the stalled Middle East peace process has finally emerged. Following the appointment of a Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, a [road map](#) to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was formally presented to the parties on 30 April 2003. This performance-based blueprint, elaborated by the Quartet (the United Nations, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United States of America) at a series of meetings, includes clear phases, timelines and benchmarks. It aims at achieving progress through parallel and reciprocal steps by the two parties in the political, security, economic, humanitarian and institution-building fields, under an effective international monitoring mechanism. This process should lead to the establishment of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State existing side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours, as affirmed in Security Council resolution [1397 \(2002\)](#). I was particularly encouraged by the outcome of the summit meeting between the parties and the President of the United States of America at Aqaba, Jordan, on 4 June 2003, where the two sides made a firm commitment to implementing the road map.

21. Despite the recent signs of progress, the vicious circle of violence, retaliation and revenge continued during most of the period under review, resulting in further substantial loss of life and destruction. A total collapse of the Palestinian economy was prevented only by the infusion of significant foreign assistance, including through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and other United Nations agencies and programmes. A deteriorating security environment and problems of access hampered the efforts of the United Nations and others to address the growing humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory, as further detailed in the following chapter.

22. Through my direct contacts and the Quartet mechanism, most recently at the meeting of the Quartet on 22 June 2003 on the shores of the Dead Sea, in Jordan, I remained personally engaged in efforts at achieving peace in the Middle East. The Security Council was kept informed of those efforts and relevant

developments in monthly briefings by the Secretariat. The final goal of the road map, and of the entire peace process, remains a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict, including the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks, on the basis of Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#) and 1397 (2002), the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991 and the principle of land for peace, agreements previously reached by the parties, and the peace initiative endorsed by the League of Arab States at its Beirut summit in March 2002.

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Peacekeeping and peace-building

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47. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon continued to monitor the Blue Line between Israel and Lebanon and to liaise with the parties to avert or contain tensions. There were few violent incidents and only minor ground violations of the Line. Frequent Israeli violations of Lebanese air space, however, drew retaliatory anti-aircraft fire from Hizbollah. I have continued to remind the parties to respect fully the Blue Line. The Lebanese armed forces increased their activity in the south, but the Government of Lebanon has yet to take all necessary steps to restore its full authority there. The Mine Action Coordination Centre coordinated the clearance of over 4 million square metres of mined area in southern Lebanon.

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Chapter II

Meeting humanitarian commitments

70. There have been significant improvements and disturbing setbacks in humanitarian affairs over the past year. While long-standing conflicts in Angola, Sierra Leone and the Sudan appear to be moving towards resolution, thus easing the humanitarian situation in those countries, outbreaks of fighting in Côte d'Ivoire, the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia have exacerbated the already devastating human suffering in those areas. Protracted conflicts in Colombia and the Occupied Palestinian Territory continue to give rise to grave concern. Numerous natural disasters have caused much suffering and loss of life, and in some places have wreaked havoc on populations already ravaged by war or infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and, especially, HIV/AIDS.

71. The United Nations system has sought to respond to the numerous humanitarian crises both equitably and efficiently, placing the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality at the core of its efforts. Significant energies have been expended over the year in ensuring a more coherent and strategically coordinated humanitarian response, through further strengthening the consolidated appeals process and partnerships with recipient countries, non-governmental organizations and other international institutions.

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Delivering humanitarian assistance and the challenge of underfunded emergencies

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96. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the humanitarian situation has yet to show signs of improvement following the parties' embarking on implementation of the Quartet's road map in June 2003. For most of the past year, the situation has been increasingly desperate and the local population has been facing unprecedented levels of hardship. Closures and curfews have crippled the economy, plunging 1.3 million Palestinians into poverty. Military operations have left over 10,000 homeless. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been delivering emergency assistance to over one million affected Palestinians, including food aid, shelter reconstruction and employment creation. Heavy restrictions on movement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory have posed serious obstacles to the operations of UNRWA and other international agencies. At the same time, UNRWA received only \$37.3 million in funding against an appeal for \$94 million to cover emergency operations between January and July 2003. Despite a \$37.5 million shortfall in its 2003 regular budget as at 30 June, UNRWA continued to deliver regular education, health and relief and social services to a population of over 4 million registered Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. WHO played a key role in coordinating the health sector and in providing technical assistance in key domains, such as nutrition and mental health. It also advocated for access and the right to health of the Palestinian population. The UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People provided some emergency assistance, in addition to major employment and technical assistance.

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Coordination of assistance and the protection of civilians in armed conflict

99. Effective humanitarian responses require well-managed coordination and rapid resource mobilization. Working through the inter-agency system, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs strives to ensure an adequate response to humanitarian crises by mobilizing resources, promoting access to vulnerable populations and undertaking field coordination. Furthermore, the United Nations system as a whole is committed to ensuring a smooth transition from provision of humanitarian assistance to development activities in post-conflict situations.

100. An example of an effective coordinated approach to a humanitarian crisis was the extensive inter-agency contingency preparations for the Iraq conflict. Well in advance of the outbreak of the war, a regional humanitarian coordination office was established, from which the humanitarian response was planned and coordinated in close collaboration with non-governmental organizations.

101. There has been considerable activity on the part of the Organization over the past year towards mainstreaming protection issues into the policies and decision-making processes of Member States and the United Nations system at large, including in the discussions of the Security Council. In November 2002, in my third report to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, I highlighted three emerging challenges: (a) gender-based violence in humanitarian crises and conflict situations; (b) the harmful consequences of the commercial exploitation of conflict; and (c) the escalating threat of global terrorism.

