1945, the last days of a war...a meeting of armies ... the promise of peace in a handshake. (8)

On the same April day, a continent away, another historic moment. Dressed in suits rather than uniforms, these delegates were creating a new organization to preserve the hard-won peace. (14)

The place was San Francisco, and when the writing was over, a Charter for the United Nations was signed by 50 nations. (8)

"There were many who doubted that agreement could ever be reached by these fifty countries differing so much in race, religion and culture. But these differences were all forgotten in one unshakeable unity of determination to find a way to end war." (23)
NARRATOR

The fiery words were borne out of war's misery and destruction, kindled by the world's desire for peace and well-being.

UN HQTRS, NEW YORK

Today the hope remains. But the promise for the future is tempered by the lessons of the recent past: More than 40 years have kept a world war at bay, but nations still wage war. The dream of beating swords into plowshares remains a dream. In a handshake there was so much promise then. Today the promise has yet to be fulfilled. The passage of time has left doubts about the future. After more than 40 years many look at the United Nations and ask "Why?"

TITLE

"WHY?"

A UNITED NATIONS FILM

EXT UN VISITORS ENTRANCE

Every day, as they have since these buildings rose, people from all over the world come to see the United Nations.
GROUPS OF PEOPLE
They speak many languages. They
represent every religion and culture.
They are old and young. For most of them
World War Two is something out of a
history book. They do not understand the
idealism that was generated then. (17)

104 VARIOUS VISITORS

WOMAN WITH SUNGLASSES
"Only here the people talk, the people
try to resolve the problem, but never do
anything concrete." (8)

MAN AND WOMAN
"Didn't do anything for the smaller
countries - it didn't seem to do anything
for them." (4 1/2)

(Translation from French)
"I have some doubts about its
effectiveness in conflicts because there
is no executive power in the General
Assembly or the Security Council." (11)

WOMAN
"It's more or less a status symbol to some
people". (3)

CU OF WOMAN
"So many small third world countries who
are now members and population-wise they
are so much smaller than the larger
countries who are members and they each
have an individual vote." (12)
Optimism was high when the first Secretary-General laid the cornerstone and the new Headquarters for the United Nations began rising on the banks of New York's East River. The world then was rebuilding out of the ashes left by the most destructive war in history. The memory was fresh, the vision clear. The goal was to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

Today this is a far different planet, and the United Nations mirrors that change. For one thing, there are many new nations. Vast areas of the world have made the transition from colonialism to freedom. Here they have a voice.

Since 1945, membership in the United Nations has grown from 51 countries to more than three times that number. But numbers don't tell the whole story.
In 1945, a large percentage of United Nations delegates came from industrialized countries. Now the majority represent developing nations.

This change has meant new aspirations for people who had only dreamed of nationhood when the United Nations was founded.

At the end of the Second World War most delegates were concerned about rebuilding a war-torn world. But the focus - on shelter, refugees, education, children - has shifted from war-ravaged Europe and Japan to the needs of the less developed countries which, today, make up two thirds of the United Nations.

"This is the Economic and Social Council Chamber, this time a gift from the people of Sweden. The Council has 54 nations that have been given the responsibility of promoting talks on economic, social and humanitarian issues. The ceiling was left unfinished intentionally by the Swedish architect as a symbol to the unfinished work of the Council. He wanted to remind people that we have a long way to go."
The road towards development seems to be getting longer. There are too many people, too many mouths to feed, too few doctors and nurses, not enough schools and teachers, inadequate shelter, poor sanitation; an endless list of ills caused by population growth, urbanization, underemployment and erratic economic development. (20)

Two billion more people will live in developing countries at the end of this century. Economic and social development is already slowing down. (8)

The cost of energy has gone up while prices have fallen for the raw materials found in the developing world. (8)

Economies have been weakened further by currency fluctuations. And then nature has taken a hand. (6)

In a wide area of Africa a devastating drought and man-made pressures have brought millions to the edge of starvation. (6)
Despite emergency relief help, many have died.

In the face of one of this century's greatest catastrophes, the international response has been channeled through the United Nations and non-governmental relief agencies.

Like the aftermath of the Second World War, this disaster has demanded aid on an unprecedented scale.

Their only hope lies in unselfish international goodwill.

Good intentions have brought results in international co-operation hardly imagined in 1945. Ground rules were established for underwater mining and deep sea fishing, conventions written to fight pollution in the seas, programmes devised for technical aid in developing countries and agreements reached on tariffs and trade.

From a treaty on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to the eradication of smallpox down on earth, the goal of the United Nations and its family of agencies has been to secure a better future for people everywhere.
Over the years, it has been the rule of law, not the sword, which has underlined the work of the United Nations. (6)

The International Court of Justice, located in The Hague, Netherlands, is the main judicial organ of the U.N. These 15 judges decide legal questions referred by member States. The record since 1945 has been mixed.

But in many cases ranging from territorial claims to questions of treaty interpretation, the work of the Court has expanded the scope of international law. (24)

The Court deals with disputes between nations. In the United Nations the question of individuals has always been paramount. Since its early years the Organization has championed the cause of human rights. (12)
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

(ON CAMERA)

"We stand today at the threshold of a great event both in the life of the United Nations and in the life of mankind. This universal declaration of human rights may well become the international Magna Carta of all men everywhere."

(20)

CHAIRMAN OF MEETING

(ON CAMERA)

"In favour of adoption 48, against adoption none."

(5)

NARRATOR

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed the rights of all human beings to the freedoms of life, liberty, security, conscience, religion, and opinion.

(10)

Like the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration is an ideal, a common aim for all peoples and all nations.

(7)

But in an imperfect world, the standards of human rights are neither equal nor universal. The fortunes of war have made many into refugees of misfortune. Torture and terrorism are common features in the world.

(13)
Years of resolutions, condemnations, and the work of U.N. human rights commissions have not eradicated racism and racial discrimination. Nowhere in the world is this more evident than behind the gleaming facades of South Africa's cities and towns. (15)

Apartheid, South Africa's laws of racial segregation, keep whites and blacks in separate worlds, one in a society of privilege, the other in a position of subservience without basic rights of citizenship. Over the years Apartheid has been repeatedly condemned by the United Nations. Yet apartheid prevails. (19 1/2)

For the majority of South Africans, the day-to-day reality is a world of restricted economic opportunity and fundamental freedoms. (7 1/2)

(Translation from Arabic)
"The statue symbolizes freedom which underlies the work of the Trusteeship Council. It is a gift from the Government of Denmark. (7)
(ON CAMERA)
"Distinguished members of the Trusteeship Council, I have come here as a petitioner representing...

NARRATOR
Over the years the pleas for freedom have resounded many times in this Chamber. In one of the great success stories of the United Nations, most of these cries have been answered. A measure of that success is that today this chamber mostly lies silent. All but one of the former trust territories have become independent nations, as have most of the world's non-self governing territories. There are some glaring exceptions.

In the former territory of South West Africa, repeated efforts by the United Nations to provide for self-determination have fallen on deaf ears. The territory, known as Namibia, is a study in contrasts, between master and servant. South Africa used to administer the territory under an old League of Nations Mandate.
In 1966 the General Assembly terminated the Mandate, but South Africa has not allowed Namibia its freedom, leaving a white minority to control the destiny of the black majority. (12)

The flag of Namibia is conspicuously absent as the flags of Member States are raised each morning in front of the United Nations. The flag raising ritual will not be complete until Namibia joins the community of nations, ending a trust betrayed. (16)

The United Nations has grown since its early days after the Second World War. (4)
(VOICE OVER)

"In the Secretariat building we have more than 7,400 people working here."

(ON CAMERA)

"They come from all over the world."

(VOICE OVER)

"and they do not represent their countries. They are hired and paid by the United Nations."

NARRATOR

As membership has more than tripled since 1945, the Staff and machinery to run all the new programmes has increased.

But a burgeoning bureaucracy can hamper efficiency, a problem noted by the Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar. As the head of the Secretariat, he is concerned with a smooth-running Organization as well as questions concerning peace and security in the world.
The past 40 years have seen five secretaries-general. Each has brought his own style to an office described as the most difficult in the world.

TRYGVE LIE, UN SEC-GENERAL

(VOICE OVER - TRYGVE LIE)

"International politics are the art of the possible and the practical."

(ON CAMERA)

"You have to make compromises that in the long run will serve the principles for which you stand.

"I'm sure I shall not be disappointed in the assurance I've given to my successor Mr. Hammarskjold, that in you he will find a dedicated, international team."

(DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD)

(ON CAMERA)

"He must also be servant of the principles of the Charter..."

(VOICE OVER)

"...and its aims must ultimately determine what, for him is right and wrong. A Secretary-General cannot serve on any other assumption than that within the necessary limits of human fraility and honest differences of opinion. All member nations honour their pledge to observe all articles of the Charter."

(22 1/2)
"I feel that the Secretary-General will be called upon to perform more and more functions not originally contemplated in the Charter because of the cold war, because of the existence of fear and suspicion which are unfortunately still a feature of our society and so long as the big Powers do not come to an agreement regarding the actual functioning of the Security Council."

(VOICE OVER)

"The United Nations is at the crossroads. It can either face up to its responsibilities or avoid it. I, for my part, pledge to do all that I can do to make the Organization more realistic and more effective. The main responsibility for effective action must inevitably lie with the sovereign member governments, on their wish to co-operate, on their capacity to agree with the Charter and on their will to make the world organization work."

(VOICE OVER)
(ON CAMERA)
"As Secretary-General I have the duty to
Member States of the international
community as a whole ...

(VOICE OVER)
"...to preserve independence and
impartiality in order to maintain my
usefulness. What we do expect from
member countries, that they honestly
operate altogether for the peaceful
solution of international problems. The
day countries will forget about their
interests and that they think in terms of
an international peace and security we
will be much closer to a solution of all
international problems. (35 1/2)

609 MURAL IN SECURITY COUNCIL

(Translation from French)
"This mural shows a phoenix rising out of
its own ashes as in mythology. We can
see, at the bottom of the mural, the
agony and destruction of the Second World
War, and coming out of the ashes of war
the bird symbolizing the creation of the
United Nations" (15)
"The major concern of the Security Council is to maintain peace and security. When peace is threatened somewhere in the world, a Member State can request the Council to convene."

NARRATOR

When war looms between States, this room is often the place where conflict is aired.

SEC. COUNCIL/HISTORIC FOOTAGE Since 1945, there has been a long record of Council action, and mediation to settle disputes. And when fighting has broken out, it has issued ceasefire directives and sent U.N. peace-keeping forces into troubled areas.
The blue helmet has become a symbol of United Nations efforts to fulfill its most important role: Maintaining peace in a troubled world. Peace-keeping forces are an idea that grew with the United Nations. Nothing like it has ever been seen before. U.N. soldiers have served in many of the world's danger points including the Middle East and the former Congo. The troops are made available by Member States. Although armed, they use force only in self defence. Their job is to help stop the fighting and keep the peace.

Despite the success of peace-keeping forces, they cannot be used when the Permanent Members of the Security Council do not agree. Wars are still a common occurrence of recent history. They have claimed too many lives, caused too much sorrow, and make a mockery out of the quest for peace.
"This is the Japanese Peace Bell. It was given by the United Nations Association of Japan in 1954..."

For visitors to the United Nations symbols such as these need to be reinforced with deeds.

"...The bell says "Long live absolute world peace" and it's rung at least once a year."

After more than 40 years a cloud hangs over the majestic vision of building a new and better world out of the ruins of the Second World War.
The arms race continues to dominate the planet. We live with a doctrine of security based on nuclear deterrence. (6) These frightful weapons were not in the minds of those who wrote the Charter's noble words in 1945. (6)

The world has become far more complex since those hopeful days in San Francisco. Today we risk the future by becoming too cynical. We need to remember the handshake and the hope. (12)

"You can't say, well, it's not working. Idealistically or the way our pictures are, so let's not do it. You have to keep staying with it." (7 1/2)

"I think it is a good forum and that is what we need, a good forum for debate and discussion." (7)

"It's not the question that when they will get together - we have to get together or else there won't be a world to have." (7)
"We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedoms, to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours ...."

Simple, eloquent, as meaningful today as they were when they were written more than 40 years ago.

Much has changed in the world since 1945. But the goals of the United Nations are still the same. More than ever we need a new commitment to the principles of the Charter. For in an age of nuclear weapons, the answer to "Why a United Nations?" can only be, "We dare not risk the alternative."