Part VIII

Perspectives
Chapter XXVI  The Legacy of the Recent Cycle of World Conferences of the United Nations

I. Preliminary Observations: The International Legal Order in a World of Profound Contradictions

International Law has marked its presence in the recent cycle of the World Conferences convened by the United Nations in the nineties and by the turn of the century. Those Conferences, which I had the occasion to follow closely,1 have contributed decisively to form the substantive content of the international agenda of this beginning of the XXIst century. Relevant passages of their final documents (declarations and plans or programmes of action) identify key issues of direct concern to the international community, propose courses of action as a response to new challenges and in pursuance of a new international order with more social justice, and propound the cultural and spiritual development of human societies, to the benefit of humankind as a whole.

They contain, in fact, numerous references to the international community, in the sense not of the traditional community of States but rather and clearly of the enlarged international community, – comprising States, international organizations and human beings, either individually or in human groups or collectivities. Their messages are thus addressed to States as well as the other subjects of contemporary International Law. References are often made to international treaties and instruments regulating matters of interest to humankind as a whole (mainly in the domains of human rights protection and environmental protection, among others).

One could hardly assess the legacy of the recent cycle of U.N. World Conferences without outlining preliminarily some features of the world scenario in which they took place, – as perspicaciously summed up, e.g., by the statement of the Delegation of Pakistan at the II World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, on 16 June 1993, which drew lessons from our times in the following terms:

1 Having personally participated in all the stages, including the Drafting Committee, of one of them (the 1993 II World Conference on Human Rights), in the preparatory world of another (the 1995 World Summit on Social Development), and in events associated with yet another one (the 1992 U.N. Conference on Environment and Development).