

OPEN LETTER TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Copenhagen, November 9th, 1956

HIS EXCELLENCY,
THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS,
DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD

My dear Mr. Secretary General.

In view of the widespread anxiety called forth by serious divergencies among member states of the United Nations Organization, as regards the interpretation of their rights as sovereign nations and of their obligations towards the Organization, I take the liberty of addressing myself to you with some considerations, in continuation of my letter to the United Nations of June 9th, 1950.

As stressed in the letter, full access to information regarding the conditions in every country for life in all its aspects and free intercourse and exchange of opinion across all boundaries must form the foundation for that co-operation in confidence between nations, which in our time is so vital for the future of mankind. Indeed, it is only by such co-operation that the promises for improving the welfare of peoples all over the globe, held out by the development of science, can be fulfilled and the menace to civilization arising from the new powerful means of destruction can be eliminated.

An open world where nations, in mutual security, can assert themselves solely by the extent to which they can contribute to the common culture and are able to help others with experience and resources may at the moment appear as a remote ideal. Still, this goal is in conformity with the avowed aspirations of all nations, and it appears that an initiative from the United Nations Organization in this direction might contribute to a development in the interest of all.

Not least in times of crises, the hopes of people all over the world are centered on the United Nations Organization and on its efforts to uphold the peace and safeguard human rights. Besides lending support to immediate urgent endeavours, it would seem that an essential strengthening of the potentialities of the Organization for creating confidence between nations might result from a general declaration of adherence to the principle of openness.

In particular, all nations might be called upon to declare their readiness to assist the Organization in obtaining the information necessary for impartial judgement of any issue with which the organization may be confronted. Such assurances might not only serve to relieve present tensions but might also, by helping to harmonize the interests and obligations of the individual nations, be a step towards the realization of world-wide co-operation.

In the hope that these considerations may in some modest way be of aid to your untiring endeavours in the service of the United Nations Organization,

respectfully yours,
NIELS BOHR