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This letter was sent to the writers and journalists suggested by Gabriela Mistral.

As you may know, I have, together with Gabriela Mistral, Sigrid Undset, Alfonso Reyes, Samin Cano, Maurice, Edmond Berriot and other friends, started a campaign for the adoption of an international treaty for the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide, meaning the destruction of national, racial, religious and other human groups. The concept of genocide envisages the human group as an organic living entity with body and soul. The draft treaty on genocide which the Secretary General of the United Nations has circulated among governments aims at the protection of human groups from physical, biological and cultural destruction. The concept of genocide goes to the very roots of international and inter-group relations and tries to make the world safe for a diversity of races, cultures and creeds.

Many distinguished world leaders have already joined our campaign which found expression in an appeal addressed to the General Assembly of the United Nations urging the adoption of a convention on the crime of genocide. The response from Latin American countries was most heartening. Presidents of parliaments, writers and great jurists of many Latin American countries joined us in signing this appeal. This was no surprise to me, as I am aware of the warm humanitarian spirit and great intellectual generosity of the Latin American peoples. The delegations of all Latin American countries at the UN supported our action and I wish to express, on behalf of myself and my colleagues, my deep appreciation of this generous attitude.

However, our appeal reached the Assembly too late to achieve immediate results. Under these circumstances, the draft treaty on genocide was referred by the General Assembly to the Economic and Social Council for submission of a final draft to the next Assembly.

In February, the Economic and Social Council will meet at Lake Success and will start debate on genocide. However, we need more support and especially leadership in the Council on this issue. The basic resolution on genocide of December 11, 1946 which called for a genocide convention is considered largely the achievement of Latin America, since it was sponsored by Cuba and Panama, with India joining in. Therefore, and because of the continued interest of the Latin American countries I hope the Latin American members of the Economic and Social Council will be willing to assume leadership in furthering this great cause.

Let me add that neither I nor my colleagues imply that the draft convention prepared by the Secretariat should be adopted without amendments. Our interest lies in getting quick action on a convention relating to the concept of genocide, because it protects not only physical existence but also the spiritual expression and cultural creativeness of human groups. This is of paramount importance to our civilization.

May I therefore enlist your support for this idea and ask you to further this just cause by your writings which have, as I know, such a great influence on public opinion in your country and elsewhere.

Be assured of my deep appreciation for everything you may be able to do at this short notice on this very urgent matter.

[Documentos sobre el genocidio] [manuscrito]

Libros y documentos

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