

NATIONS

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On the Record

Excerpts from a speech by Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy accepting the *McGill International Review Award of Distinction*, at the 10th annual meeting of the McGill Model United Nations Assembly, McGill University, Montréal, January 27, 2000

This honour is all the more special given the important occasion at which it is given. A decade ago, the McGill Model UN Assembly was established. Today, it is the largest gathering of its kind in North America.

I am constantly impressed by the unbridled enthusiasm with which young Canadians are embracing the brave new world. The past decade [has seen] dramatic change internationally. Fundamental to this change is the evolving nature of world peace and security. We need to pay attention to the human dimension in global affairs.

A strong and relevant United Nations is indispensable to this goal. That is why Canada sought election to the Security Council, the only global body with a mandate for maintaining peace and security. Yet [the Council] has not always risen to the challenges posed by new security threats. It has sometimes shrunk from its obligations—making itself less rather than more relevant.

The protection of civilians must figure at the top of Security Council concerns. To this end, we initiated a debate to raise awareness and shape action. The result was a comprehensive report by the Secretary-General, presented this past September. Our initiative and the Secretary-General's report have put the human dimension of peace and security squarely on the Council agenda. Canada now chairs a process aimed at locking in key recommendations.

During our first year on the Council, Canada has made a difference. As a result of Canada's initiatives, the Council is taking concrete action to protect civilians in conflict, and it now addresses issues that pose a direct threat to people—such as war-affected children, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, or the unprecedented Council meeting last month on the AIDS epidemic, unimaginable even a year ago. Also, the voice of human suffering—through the first-ever appearance by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross—is being heard, and listened to, at the Council table.

This is making the Council more relevant to people. This is real progress. ●—

For the full text of the speech, visit the Department's Web site at www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca and click on "News Releases" and then "Statements," or call the Media Relations Office at (613) 995-1874. Also visit the "Canada on the UN Security Council" site, accessible from the DFAIT home page.



Ghana—a key partner in Africa

The West African nation of Ghana has a proud history. In 1957 it was the first European colony in sub-Saharan Africa to achieve independence, and in following years it provided inspiration to many other countries as the decolonization process advanced around the world.

Ghana is one of Canada's key partners in Africa. Our relations reflect four decades of personal and official contacts that began through bilateral aid, the United Nations and the Commonwealth. In recent years ties have broadened to include trade and investment, and a Canadian Trade Commissioner has been stationed in Accra since September 1997.

Ghana and Canada have a long-standing relationship in development co-operation. At present, the Government of Ghana's primary objective is to reduce poverty and significantly raise the living standards of Ghanaians. To support this objective, the Canadian International Development Agency's assistance program to Ghana has focussed on rural development, water supply to rural areas, human resource development, education and health, balance of payments support, and energy and natural resources.

Under the leadership of President Jerry Rawlings, Ghana has undergone a peaceful transition from military rule to participatory democratic government. The new 1992 constitution created an environment for the formation of political parties, many of which are actively preparing to contest presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for this coming December.

Like Canada, Ghana is a proponent of peacekeeping, and is the fourth-largest contributor of personnel to UN peacekeeping missions worldwide. Ghanaian armed forces personnel have been deployed as peacekeepers on missions in Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Lebanon and elsewhere. Approximately 1000 Ghanaian soldiers are currently serving in the UN Mission in Sierra Leone.

Ghana-Canada partnerships continue to grow in a number of areas. Foreign Affairs Minister Axworthy will attend the West African Conference on War-Affected Children, to be held in Accra on April 27 and 28. Jointly hosted by Canada and Ghana, the Conference will aim to launch a regional initiative for addressing the multiple crises of children in conflict.

In the years ahead, there is no doubt that Canada's relationship with Ghana will become closer, particularly in the area of joint human security issues on the African continent. ●—