

The recent attacks upon UNIFIL* in Southern Lebanon are especially disturbing. They are indicative of how fragile is the situation on Lebanon's southern border and the dangers posed therein for a further major escalation of regional tensions. UNIFIL must be allowed to function effectively. Agreement must be reached which will ensure the withdrawal of all foreign forces, not there at the specific request of Lebanon, and which will guarantee respect by all parties for the international border.

Mr. President, Canada calls upon all members of this Assembly to give their strongest support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Lebanon. We must give every encouragement to a political solution which will result in true national reconciliation in that war-torn country.

This brief survey of the Middle East, albeit glum in parts, reveals some elements of hope, and I note the willingness among far-seeing leaders in countries such as Jordan, Israel, Egypt and Morocco to engage in sustained efforts to achieve a solution to the Arab/Israeli dispute. It is after all the regional actors themselves who hold the keys to the resolution of their conflicts. We must act quickly and decisively to support those actively seeking peace before further deterioration makes still more difficult the task we face. I am especially concerned about the further which tensions adverse economic circumstances are likely to generate. The decline in oil production and prices has significantly affected employment opportunities. It has also had major negative connotations for the economies of many of the labour surplus states in the region. We must act now lest a concomitant climate of political discontent thwart efforts to bring peace.

For Canada's part we shall not slacken in our efforts or our resolve nor shall we shirk our responsibilities. My country has a long history of positive and cooperative involvement in the region through UNRWA* and various peacekeeping efforts including UNDOF*, UNTSO* and the MFO*. We have also endeavoured to contribute, within our means, to improving economic conditions within the region.

My Foreign Minister has been particularly concerned that we vigorously support, economically as well as politically, those who are actively working for peace. Most recently, for example, we have moved both to strengthen Canada's economic cooperation with Jordan and to provide additional funding for small developmental projects intended to assist the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. We believe that concrete measures such as these can make a real contribution to sustaining a positive and supportive climate for those who are actively seeking peace.