

Mr. President,

On behalf of Canada, I congratulate you on your election as President of this milestone session of the General Assembly. Your long career of devotion to the principles of the U.N. is recognized by this election, as well as the vitality of the democratic institutions of the Government you represent.

With other spokesmen, I join in expressing Canada's grief at the suffering caused by massive earthquakes in Mexico. Around this tragedy, we have seen arising spontaneously across national boundaries a rallying of forces to complement the Mexican Government's own extraordinary rescue operation. In times of such natural disasters, the world truly becomes a neighborhood and our people extend both our prayers and our practical help. We were pleased to join yesterday in the consensus resolution adopted in this Assembly, expressing our joint solidarity with the Mexican people.

I would be remiss as a Canadian, Mr. President, if I did not sadly recall that last week Canada and the UN lost one of our greatest soldiers and statesmen, General E.L.M. Burns. Canada was particularly proud that he was the UN's first commander of UNEF and a practical architect of peace-keeping. But General Burns was also one of Canada's most thoughtful proponents of disarmament. His contributions truly embodied the best ideals of the Charter. We mourn his passing, but in reflecting on his dedication to the high principles and purposes of the United Nations we find an example that is inspiring for the years ahead.

Mr. President,

At the age of 40, some people have what is termed a mid-life crisis. But this description does not apply to the United Nations. There may be multiple crises in the world system today, but at the age of 40, the U.N. is a long way from mid-life. In fact, viewed in the long range of history, the U.N. is still in its early years.

This perspective helps us to establish a more balanced and fairer assessment of the U.N. in this important anniversary year. Optimists would like to see the U.N. as the flowering of a world that has come together. Pessimists decry it for not having brought peace. Realists recognize that the U.N. has persisted in its global strategies for human security, despite the divisions among nations.