

dation is being laid for an international society governed by legal principles and codes of conduct. As with domestic society, stability is not possible without law — and law is powerless without consensus. The integration into domestic law of the rights codified by the UN in its Declaration of Human Rights and the covenants on racial discrimination and the rights of women — this is testimony to a growing international consensus....

We are witnessing today a profound transformation in the substance of international discourse. Issues once thought intractable are now remarkably close to resolution. And issues once considered the province of domestic governments are now the focus of international activity. These are on the international agenda because they are pressing and because no state no matter how powerful or well-intentioned can resolve them on its own.

Thus the environment is emerging as the most important international challenge of the remainder of this century and the next. In a very few years, the environment will be seen as a threat to human existence in the same way nuclear war has been regarded in the past. It is now a challenge to national survival. It is also an area where the distinction between the domestic and the international agenda is collapsing. Pollution knows no borders. In the end, we all share the same air and water; we all suffer from its corruption or its loss.

Let us agree during this Assembly to hold the proposed Conference on the Environment and Development in 1992. Let us move forward towards a Climate Change Convention where Canada has played a lead role in the development of a UN draft. And let us start a realistic dialogue between the developed and developing world on this environmental scourge which threatens all states, rich and poor.

I detect today a new and welcome wind of change in the stale and unproductive state of relations between North and South which marked the 1970s and the first part of this decade. There is a growing recognition that grand, vague visions must give way to pragmatic dialogue, and that attributing blame does little to solve problems.

In fact, without fanfare and grand initiative, a new process of dialogue has already begun between the developed and developing world....

We are witnessing a profound transformation in the substance of international discourse

Canada believes it is useful to encourage intensive consultations leading to a new conversation between the developed and the developing world, a conversation on focused issues, with a view to arriving at joint action for a common cause.

Conversation, not confrontation. We cannot remake the world anew. But we can — and we must — redress the errors of the past — methodically, pragmatically, realistically and collectively.

Discussions on the environment, on drugs, on investment, trade and debt are worthy of early pursuit. The agenda should be balanced, covering issues of interest to both the developed and developing world. We will be pursuing this question actively in the months ahead with our G-7 partners and the developing world. Soviet involvement in this effort would be welcome, giving them the opportunity to further act on their interest in contributing to the international order. It would also reflect the universal nature of this challenge....

The challenge before us today is to alter our traditional behaviour at an unprecedented rate, in the face of a planet showing so many signs of use and abuse.

We know only too well the litany of global horrors before us:

— a burgeoning global population whose size will expand by almost 3.5 billion in thirty-five short years;

— an ailing environment whose forests are dying or disappearing, whose air is being poisoned, and whose oceans and rivers are becoming dump-sites and cesspools;

— 14 million children dying each year from common illness and poor nutrition;

— a generation debilitated by drugs, the world trade in which now exceeds the value of trade in oil and is second only to the arms trade;

— dozens of economies unable to simultaneously pay for past mistakes and develop a successful future;

— and the proliferation of weapons — chemical and nuclear, as well as the spreading technology of weapon delivery systems — creating a time bomb which threatens the relief we now feel at the superpowers' new-found cooperation.

This Organization, like other international assemblies, reflects the world from which it draws its members and its mission.

There have been many successes:

— the quiet but spectacular victories of UNICEF, the UNHCR and the World Health Organization;

— the triumph of peacekeeping — 50,000 participants of which so deservedly received the Nobel Prize;

— the mediation of disputes, so honourably presided over by the present Secretary-General.

But there have also been failures, opportunities lost to dated ideology and the lack of political will. The challenge posed by the future is not to invent new institutions but to make this UN family of institutions work more effectively and humanely.

Mr. President, we are in a new type of race in which we will either all be winners or we will all be losers.

Let us lay to rest the worn out stereotypes of the past. Let us set aside our differences and work forthrightly for a secure global future. Let us consecrate ourselves anew as United Nations.

And let us confront squarely the problems of our era as men and women aware of the challenges before us, mindful of the consequences of failure, and dedicated to solutions that will work, not dreams that will die. ■