

Ministers,
Members of Parliament,
Honoured Guests:

I am pleased to have this opportunity, so soon after my appointment as Chief of the Defence Staff, to discuss Canada's support for international peace and security through our membership in such organizations as the United Nations, and particularly through our participation in UN peacekeeping efforts.

The end of the Cold War did not herald a more stable and peaceful world. In fact, it had an opposite, destabilizing effect, with the result that Canada, and other concerned nations, must now deal with a variety of new and very serious security problems. Regrettably, many of those problems reflect the re-emergence of age-old rivalries and animosities which had been restrained during the era of superpower confrontation.

While the collapse of one of those superpowers allowed these conflicts to be renewed, it also allowed the UN to assert itself as the legitimate international peace broker. However, in responding to the multitude of pressing problems around the globe, the UN has stretched its own resources and capabilities.

Canada has routinely contributed to the goal of world peace through diplomacy, humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping operations. Today, in fact, there are more Canadian servicemen and women serving throughout the world on peacekeeping and related duties than at any other time since Korea.

Approximately 4,700 members of the Canadian Forces (CF) are serving on peacekeeping and associated missions -- roughly double the number of a year ago. They are serving in 18 different missions located on nearly every continent. Our personnel are in Central America, the former Yugoslavia, Cyprus, the Middle East, Africa, Cambodia and along the Kuwait-Iraq border. And the missions they are undertaking range from traditional peacekeeping and humanitarian relief operations, to preventive deployments, such as the one in Macedonia where a Canadian infantry company group has been sent with the aim of pre-empting conflict, and enforcement actions like the one under way in Somalia.

We have been careful in our assessments and we have accepted these commitments confident in our abilities to sustain them in the near term. However, there can be no doubt that the current peacekeeping load is a heavy one, considering the limitations on our present and projected resources.

Mrs. McDougall set the theme for our discussions last night by suggesting that it is time to take "a hard look" at how Canada can support the UN and other organizations to maintain international peace and security in view of shrinking resources.