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CANADA AND THE UNIVERSAL FORUM FOR PEACE

An Address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York on September 27, 1967, by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin.

...If we are to judge by the pace of our activities since the conclusion of the last session, this organization is a vigorous and healthy one. Two special sessions of the Assembly, an intensive series of meetings of the Security Council, not to mention the normal activities of other United Nations bodies, testify to the continuing vitality of the United Nations.

While this record of activity is encouraging, some will no doubt say that the results at which we have arrived are disappointing and that the United Nations has only confirmed its reputation as a forum for debate rather than an instrument for action. What have been called the "interlocking stale-mates" on our agenda remain as they were before. And yet, if talk is cheap it is certainly better than resort to the use of force. It should be of some encouragement to us that our agenda is crowded and that the world so often turns to this organization with its troubles. As far as my country is concerned, the future of the United Nations is linked to its capacity to become a universal forum in which all the conflicting interests, ideologies and points of view of mankind can be brought together. Without contact there can be no co-operation. Without debate there can be no reconciliation. And, moreover, this organization was able to bring about a cease-fire in the Middle East, and this organization did assume responsibility for South West Africa. The fact that we proceed slowly and that frequent stops have to be made on the way should not be blamed on the vehicle, but on the road we have to travel.

All of us subscribe to the high ideals of the Charter by the very fact that we are here. Where we go wrong and where we are apt to be disappointed is in putting those ideals into practice. Clearly, there must be willingness to negotiate compromises. I am encouraged by the fact that at the two special sessions of the Assembly this year there were genuine and persistent efforts on all sides to negotiate. Failure to reach agreement was perhaps understandable in the circumstances. What we must ensure is that we do not accept frustration; on the contrary, we must make frustration a spur to further efforts in the continuing search for agreement on outstanding issues.