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Statements and Speeches

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THE QUESTION OF CYPRUS

A Statement to the Plenary Meeting of the Thirty-second Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, by Ambassador William H. Barton, Permanent Representative of Canada, November 8, 1977.

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Canada joined with a great majority of member states in supporting the resolutions adopted by this Assembly on the question of Cyprus in 1974 and in 1975. We have supported, as well, the mandate of the Secretary-General to provide his good offices to the two communities in Cyprus. We have continued to support the work of both the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross on the island.

But the principal focus of Canada's direct interest in the situation in Cyprus has remained the presence on the island for the past 13 years of Canadian soldiers as part of the United Nations Force in Cyprus. Over 19,000 Canadians have served in Cyprus during this period. We are proud of the contribution these men have made — along with their comrade soldiers and policemen from Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Austria, Ireland and Australia — to the practical implementation of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

I personally had the privilege of visiting the island in March of this year and can add my own testimony to that of others as to the efficiency, dedication and competence of the members of all contingents in the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus. We were, therefore, pleased to note that the draft resolution recorded in Document A/32/L.16 of November 4 includes, in its operative Paragraph 6, a renewed call for the parties concerned to co-operate with the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus.

Canada's involvement in Cyprus stems primarily from our membership in the United Nations and our readiness to assist the organization to maintain peace and security. It also stems from concern for the national integrity of a fellow Commonwealth member and for the harsh fate that has befallen countless individual Cypriots. In this connection, further attention needs to be focused on the matter of individuals who have been unaccounted for since the conflict in 1974. This question was considered at the thirtieth session of the United Nations General Assembly, and the international concern over this humanitarian issue was reflected in the language of Resolution 3395 (XXX). Yet the situation persists and we must once again urge that "the tracing and accounting for missing persons" be conducted as effectively as possible on an urgent basis.

The Canadian Government has, on many past occasions in this forum, expressed its reservations about certain aspects of the United Nations role in Cyprus. We have always believed that peacekeeping should be accompanied by peacemaking. Despite