

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

Today, since this may be my last appearance before you and to put my department's estimates in context, I would like to share with you some thoughts on what has happened over the past two years during the time I have been Minister of this portfolio.

It would be an understatement to say that it has been a period that has been challenging and unsettling for many people, but I think it has also provided us with opportunities for dealing with the future in ways that were unforeseeable several years ago. I think, however, that as Canadians we can be extremely proud of our role in dealing with these tumultuous times and in shaping the post-Cold War agenda. Despite the unpredictability and fluidity of events, our current foreign policy, based on co-operative security, sustainable prosperity, and securing democracy and respect for human values, accurately responds to the priorities facing the international community in the 1990s, as well as Canada. Therefore, I think we are well positioned to continue to play a leadership role in this period.

I do not suggest that we have had all the answers to all the questions. But we do have a framework for building a comprehensive and global approach for the promotion of Canadian interests and the resolution of conflict, and those values and those objectives that we have outlined are indeed being echoed now more than ever by others in the world.

If we look back at our record over the past two years, and at the decisions that we have taken to respond to the new international environment, we can clearly see these priorities reflected.

Perhaps the most significant development in the past two years has been the recognition of and the renewed respect for peacekeeping, in all of its forms, as the preferred option for resolving conflict.

We have worked vigorously to ensure that our policies and our operations have kept pace with the changes that have taken place in the nature and number of demands for peacekeeping missions. In February, I hosted a meeting of experts to hear a number of views as well as the latest information from the field on a wide range of peacekeeping activities.

Over the past few weeks I have visited Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia, to see first-hand what is going on and to hear directly from our Canadian peacekeepers and our allies about the current status of our missions.

One of the most difficult challenges has been the sharp increase in the number of peacekeeping missions. Canada is currently engaged in 15 peacekeeping missions, providing approximately 10 percent of the world's peacekeepers. As the number of UN operations has grown, our assessed contribution has grown