

OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Remarks by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L. B. Pearson, on the occasion of his election as President of the Seventh Session of United Nations General Assembly.

My first words must be of appreciation to my fellow delegates for having conferred this great honour on me. I shall do my best to justify your confidence and to discharge to your satisfaction the responsibilities of the presidency. I realize that your choice of a Canadian for this office is not a personal one, but a recognition of my country's profound desire to serve the purposes of the United Nations and to fulfil loyally its obligations and membership.

A fine example of impartiality and efficiency has been set by my distinguished predecessors in this office. Possibly I may be permitted to make a special mention of my immediate predecessor, Mr. Padilla Nervo, who has just vacated this chair, which he has filled with such distinction.

As your presiding officer, I will no doubt make mistakes, both of omission and commission, but I give you my assurance that they will not be mistakes from prejudice or partiality.

The Assembly opens for the first time in our new and permanent headquarters. We owe a great debt to all who have contributed their skills and their labour and their resources to the completion of these impressive, indeed these breath-taking buildings, whose facilities will so greatly aid our work in the years to come. There is, I think, a happy symbolism in the structure of our new headquarters; part of it reaching upward toward the heavens and part fixed firmly and steadily on the ground. The reconciliation of these two features is, I suppose, difficult in the art of architecture. It is even more difficult in the science of politics and in the conduct of international affairs.

It would be idle to pretend that you have assigned to me an easy or an average task. The presidents of earlier Assemblies have spoken realistically and frankly of the atmosphere of tension and crisis in which those sessions have taken place. In doing so they reflected the deep and abiding concern which all of us have felt at the complexity, at times the intractability of the problems we face. Failure to solve these problems has enveloped the world in fear and, in history, fear has always bred antagonisms, even hatreds, and has been the precursor of conflict.

So it is in our time. To avoid the ultimate tragedy of war, we must remove this black shadow of tension and anxiety by finding, through international action, a solution to present problems which will permit peoples and governments to live together, if not on the basis of friendship, at least on that of mutual toleration and understanding. There is no organization, no mechanism, no procedure which can take the place of the United Nations in the search for this solution.

This Assembly, therefore, will fail in its mission of peace if it does not take full advantage of every opportunity to lessen the fears that are in our minds and so often the animosities that are in our hearts.

The task will not be easy, for the General Assembly of 1952 faces its own crisis. The effort by the United Nations to bring about an armistice in Korea on honourable terms — which would be the only ones acceptable — remains frustrated and unsuccessful. The United Nations, therefore, has not been able to move forward into the positive phases of peaceful settlement and reconstruction in that area which should be possible, on the basis of decisions already taken by us, once the aggression has been stopped and the fighting ended. Those who prevent this armistice — the first step in the process of healing and restoration — bear a heavy responsibility before history and humanity.

Nor have other conflicts — waged without arms — diminished in intensity since our last session. There is no armistice in the Cold War, and without it we cannot