

Message from the Minister of Foreign Affairs



Since the United Nations came into being in 1945, Canada's commitment to it has been unwavering. After 54 years, and in an increasingly globalized world, the UN still provides the best hope for co-ordinated and integrated solutions to the major issues facing the planet at the beginning of a new millennium.

New threats and challenges—terrorism, crime, drugs—arise from a world in which the face of conflict has changed. Economic and social insecurity is mounting worldwide, and increasingly the well-being of the individual is at risk. As a result, a new security concern—human security—is emerging as a global issue.

We must work together to confront these challenges, and this means working through a vibrant United Nations. A key factor in Canada's decision to run yet again for a seat on the United Nations Security Council was our recognition of the UN's central place in a global system. Canada was successful in its bid and began serving a two-year term on the Council on January 1, 1999. In electing us to this seat, the UN membership was acknowledging Canada's long-standing contribution to promoting peace and security around the world.

We have made human security and the protection of civilians in armed conflict the cornerstone of our agenda for our term on the Security Council. But well before beginning our Council term, Canada was working to advance human security in other ways. Our leadership in the international efforts to ban anti-personnel mines is a clear example. Although the Ottawa Convention banning such mines was not negotiated through UN channels, it now resides with the UN and is enshrined as part of the UN legal system. Only the UN has the capacity to give the Convention the global weight it needs to be an effective international safeguard.

Canada also led in another recent global effort to protect human security. From our preparatory work to chairing the negotiating conference, Canada strove vigorously to establish the International Criminal Court—an international tribunal mandated to try cases of crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes.

These recent actions are representative of Canada's long-term commitment to the United Nations and to the UN's central role as the most important multilateral body in the world.

Producing the *Canadian Reference Guide to the United Nations* is a modest way of helping Canadians, and others throughout the world, understand that role by explaining the key functions of the UN and its many components, agencies and commissions. It is also a way to highlight the importance of the UN to Canada, plus Canada's part in the history and effectiveness of the UN as a vital global institution. I hope you will find it an informative and useful tool.

Lloyd Axworthy