

Government Orders

On the other hand, it would be unthinkable to try to clarify Canada's future role without undertaking a global review of our national defence policy.

I take this opportunity to point out to the hon. minister of defence that our defence policy must be reviewed as soon as possible, that patience is running out among Canadians concerned about military spending and soldiers who need specific mandates in order to do a good job.

In closing, I want to tell all Canadian peacekeepers how much we respect and admire the work they do in a difficult and often hostile environment.

I especially want to salute the officers and troops from Valcartier, who account for over 80 per cent of the peacekeeping force in Bosnia. I am personally concerned as that base is located partly in my riding of Charlesbourg and partly in that of my colleague from Portneuf.

Through their commitment and their work, those soldiers have helped preserve Canada's tradition of excellence in peace-keeping.

As I said before, they can count on all the understanding and support that my party and myself can offer them.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I request the unanimous consent of the House to continue sitting between one and two p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Hon. members heard the request. Is there unanimous consent?

[English]

Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, if there is unanimous consent the government side is quite happy to sit through lunch.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): We will now go on to the period of questions and comments following the intervention of the hon. member for Charlesbourg.

There not being any we will resume debate with the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate you on your appointment as a deputy speaker since this is the first opportunity I have had to do so.

I would also like to thank and congratulate the right hon. Prime Minister for allowing the House to have this debate on peacekeeping and defence issues so early in the 35th Parliament. We see a big difference between the 34th Parliament and the

35th Parliament. We had requested many such debates in the 34th Parliament and such debates never happened.

I hope all members of all parties will take to heart the words of the right hon. Prime Minister when he said: "We want to hear your individual views". I know someone from the New Democratic Party just arrived from that region. It would be very important to hear what he has to say. This is an opportunity to put on our creative hats, not to have to worry about party discipline, and to express what we know from our constituents and what we know from our experience.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate the constituents of Parkdale—High Park, especially the Canadians of Croatian, Serbian and Muslim descent. I must say that in my 10 years of representing the area and having so many Canadians of those backgrounds in my riding we have never had any conflicts, any squabbles, any fights, et cetera. The Canadians of Muslim, Serbian, Croatian descent are showing that these three peoples can live together in peace and harmony. I congratulate them through this forum and all Canadians across this land who are showing the example that we want peace and not the kind of thing that is ongoing in Bosnia.

• (1250)

The Leader of the Official Opposition rightly took us through the happenings at the end of the cold war and immediately after the cold war, how Solidarnosc started the movement and then the Baltic states and other countries. However the world has become a more not a less complicated place since the end of the cold war.

As the minister mentioned in his statement the key body in the international system, the United Nations, is straining to keep up with the increasing demands being placed on it. Canada is working to alleviate the pressure on the UN. Our approach is a broad scope. It ranges from strengthening and reforming the UN system itself, including providing staff to key areas such as the peacekeeping unit, to promoting the concept of co-operative security in which strengthened regional institutions and arrangements can play a larger role in contributing to international peace and security, thus relieving some of the burden placed on the UN system.

In this brief intervention I would like to focus on the efforts of Canada to encourage and position regional organizations to play a more active role in support of the UN. If we put the emphasis on regional institutions getting into potential conflict areas this will alleviate the pressures of the UN and then it can do a more effective job in crises such as the one in the former Yugoslavia.

In January 1992 the UN Secretary General launched his agenda for peace. As the minister mentioned in this document the Secretary General spoke about conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy. In this regard he highlighted the increasingly important role that regional organizations could take to