

UN, with its lengthy experience and practical expertise in the region, may well have a role to play. But all of us can bring our own experience and expertise in multilateral negotiations to help address regional issues. Some of these efforts can begin now by focusing on areas and themes, such as those already suggested, with others to be added later, we hope, as confidence builds.

We in Canada are ready to bring to this common effort Canada's own particular skills in several areas. Among these are our multilateral involvement in arms control and verification, in non-proliferation, in peacekeeping and conflict resolution and in a variety of developmental fields. We are ready to participate, in particular, in the working groups on water and on arms' control. We would be willing to host in Canada, meetings of these working groups, as appropriate. We have also noted, with great interest and support, references by other speakers to the question of refugees. Canada also believes that this sensitive and important issue deserves the most serious attention.

Mr. Chairmen, distinguished delegates, we are on the brink of a better future. But we must not exaggerate what the non-regional countries can bring even to this multilateral process. In the work that is launched as a result of this first meeting, we must strive to create in the populations of the region a realization that genuine peace is possible. We must help to create a belief that the future holds promises that the present cannot deliver.

Mr. Chairman, over the years, we in Canada have opened our doors to thousands of people from the Middle East region who have left their homes in search of a better future. Too often they have had no choice but to leave, driven away by war or internal conflict.

We believe that we must begin to build a tomorrow where fear of war has been banished from the region.

Our humanitarian experience has given us a particular appreciation for the values of diversity and tolerance. We believe that such tolerance can be enhanced through human contact, dialogue, travel and communication.

This multilateral process should, in our view, begin to address some of these questions. We believe that such contact and dialogue can contribute to an understanding and appreciation which will be a vital part of healing the wounds of the past.

We believe that respect for human dignity can, in turn, help to build societies in which all the people of the region can enjoy their full legal, social, political and human rights. This goal is already in the process of realization in other parts of the world. The people who live in the very cradle of civilization deserve no less.