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FOREWORD FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

Dept. of Foreign Affairs
Min. des Affaires étrangères

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The Right Honourable Paul Martin
Prime Minister of Canada

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Introduction: The Need to Review

Foreign policy is how a nation best expresses itself to the world. Our policies as a government, reflecting our beliefs as Canadians, are articulated through the words we speak, the decisions we make and the actions we implement in the name of Canada.

Over the course of the past year and a half, my government issued our country's first National Security Policy, launched the Canada Corps with its work in Ukraine, led the International Mission for Iraqi Elections, commanded the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and the multinational force in Haiti, negotiated a new Security and Prosperity Partnership with our counterparts in North America, pursued modern trade and science and technology agreements with India, Japan and Korea, and demonstrated our leadership in combating HIV/AIDS in the developing world and encouraging debt relief for the poorest of countries.

We are proud of these accomplishments. But we also understand that from time to time, a government needs to take a hard and comprehensive look at what is working and what is not in its foreign policy; at how the world is evolving and whether Canada is prepared; at how best to project Canadian values and interests into the world and make a real difference in the lives of its embattled peoples, now and in the future.

This is the right time to review our foreign policy.

Why? Because the world is changing, quickly and radically, and these changes matter to Canada—not in abstract terms, and not only to students of international relations, but tangibly and to everyone. Our security, our prosperity and our quality of life all stand to be influenced and affected by these global transformations and by the challenges they bring—from the spectre of international terrorism to the threats of virulent disease, climate change and disappearing fish stocks. It is through our foreign policy that Canada must and will act to ensure that we as a nation overcome the trials and embrace the opportunities of the 21st century.

Make no mistake: We are in the midst of a major rebalancing of global power. New nations are rising as military and economic forces. Many established powers are striving to maintain their influence through regional integration and new alliances. In a world of traditional and emerging giants, independent countries like Canada—countries with small populations—risk being swept aside, their influence diminished, their ability to compete hampered. That may sound dramatic, but the stakes are that high. We will have to be smart, focused, agile, creative and dogged in the pursuit of our interests.

Why is the time right for a foreign policy review? Because we want to make a real difference in halting and preventing conflict and improving human welfare around the world. This may sound naively altruistic, but it's not. Rather, it's a doctrine of activism that over decades has forged our nation's international character—and will serve us even better in today's changing world. The people of our country have long understood that, as a proud citizen of the world, Canada has global responsibilities. We can't solve every problem, but we will do what we can to protect others, to raise them up, to make them safe.

Such intentions can be frustrating, for the world does not lack for a supply of grinding poverty, murderous conflict and abject despair. There is only so much that we, as one nation, can accomplish. But that fact must not dissuade us. Instead, it must inspire us—inspire us to rally cooperative action to address major concerns; inspire us to focus on countries and conflicts within which we can truly make a difference; inspire us to keep at it and to follow through, to understand that real progress means not only keeping the peace but doing the hard work of building the systems of health, education and justice that will enable people to grow, to succeed, to thrive.

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