

Canada can be proud of the progress accomplished by the UN to improve the fate of millions around the world.

We can also be proud of our contribution to these efforts. We were, as I stated before, one of the first signatories of the Charter. But it was also a Canadian, the late John Humphrey, who wrote the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

And it was my predecessor, Lester B. Pearson, who helped usher the UN into adulthood. Among his valuable contributions to the UN, undoubtedly the most visionary were his proposals to help set up the first peacekeeping operation in 1956, during the Suez Crisis. Since then more than 100 000 Canadians have served in over 30 peacekeeping missions around the world - aside from our contribution to the Korean War. Today I want to pay tribute to those who have served and those who have died in the service of peace and of the United Nations.

Canada has worked through the UN to fight for the rights of the poor and the underprivileged, to promote respect for the environment and to push for disarmament. We have consistently been one of the largest suppliers of food aid. We have assisted in election monitoring missions in many parts of the world.

The International Civil Aviation Organization is based in Montreal. The Food and Agriculture Organization was founded in Quebec City and just last week celebrated its anniversary by holding a major conference there. Canada has played a leading role in the International Atomic Energy Agency as well as in many other UN specialized agencies. And last year, Canada put forward a bid to host the permanent Secretariat for Biodiversity in Montreal.

We have served on the Security Council in every decade since the UN was created, and we have recently declared our intention to run for a Security Council seat for the 1999-2000 term.

As we stand here today at the beginning of the next chapter in UN history and on the threshold of the 21st century, I am pleased to state that Canada remains firmly committed to the United Nations and its goals.

Indeed, I had the honour of addressing the United Nations General Assembly in New York last month, and on that occasion I outlined what Canada believes should be the UN's main priorities for the years ahead.

We believe the UN should pay particular attention to three main objectives: preventive diplomacy, rapid reaction and peacebuilding. All the components of the UN system must help identify and resolve tensions before they degenerate into conflict. When preventive diplomacy efforts fail, the UN must be able to intervene quickly