

In fact, in New York, I was "out front" and "up front" on our own experiences in Canada in the past year. And I can tell you that there was much interest in the United Nations about the domestic situation in Canada -- not simply because Canada is a leading supporter of that organization or internationally respected as a mediator, peacekeeper and partner in trade and development.

We in Canada are also seen as a model of democratic thinking and practice. After all, it was the United Nations itself in its recent report on Human Development that deemed Canada to be the number one country in the world in which to live.

So, despite all the naysayers in this country who seem to have an uncanny ability to generate headlines from what is wrong with Canada -- at least, the domestic media -- there are a lot more people outside of this country who have a strong interest in finding out what is right with Canada.

I will tell you what I told the General Assembly, because there is a good deal of interest there in the "why's" and "wherefore's" of our protracted process of renewal. I told the United Nations: "In true democracies, people constantly strive for improvement."

As Canadians, we have learned that democracy and freedom can be maintained only by vision and constant vigilance. New ideas for the future must be grounded in the fundamentals that were the original basis for unity. As Prime Minister Brian Mulroney told Canadians: "What Canada's leaders have produced is a series of constitutional reforms that strengthen the bonds that brought us together in 1867. These reforms renew the concepts that are at the core of Confederation. They provide a strong framework, a solid foundation, to let us move confidently into the future together."

I spelled out the "overriding values to which virtually every Canadian subscribes":

- unswerving respect for the rights of the individual, supported by the rule of law;
- a strong and deep attachment to democracy, its values and its institutions;
- a passionate commitment to social justice and economic progress for all;
- respect for national and international obligations; and
- a will to resolve differences peacefully through conciliation, compromise and consensus.