I should declare a Canadian interest. We believe in the UN, and indeed, in the principle of multilateral action. We believe that kind of co-operation is most important to nations like ours and smaller nations that are not superpowers; nations that need a world with rules and with the ability to have these rules respected.

We prefer a UN that can act as well as talk; and we believe it is important to enlarge the number of areas where the members of the UN can act together. It was in that spirit that Canada proposed more than 30 years ago the concept of peacekeeping under UN auspices; and it explains why Canada, though our population is only 26 million, is the fifth-largest financial contributor to the UN family in the world. The term that ended in December 1990 was our seventh term on the Security Council -- more than any other country except the Permanent Five. We think we have learned some lessons about the UN and hope to apply some of them now.

Today, therefore, I would like to examine, from a staunch multilateral perspective, the issues of peace and security in the Middle East and, more generally, the implication of this crisis for the future role of the United Nations in international peace and security.

What are the issues at stake in the Middle East?

Saddam Hussein has tried to say that his very personal grab of Kuwait was somehow not an act of violent assault and outright theft, for the sole benefit of the Iraq he has done so much to destroy. He pretends it was part of a larger struggle, rooted in Palestinian injustice, the grievances of Arabs, the offended dignity of Muslims, and even the exhausted aspirations of the billions of poor of the Third World. His appropriation of these causes is ludicrous. But the causes themselves are real and compelling.

They fester particularly in a region whose history this century has been one of violence, war and deadly rivalries. Where enormous wealth in some quarters is contrasted by misery and poverty in others. Where the passion of religious doctrine can contribute to acts of extremism as well as those of solace.

Surely the lessons of five Middle East wars since 1945 illustrate the futility and danger of relying on competitive armed camps for security, on arming to the teeth rival poles of ambition. Saddam Hussein has shown what one pathological personality can do in such circumstances.

The foundations of real security need to be grounded in confidence-building. The region needs confidence in the intentions of all leaders and countries of the area. It needs