

protection of human rights -- it's a long list that calls for the UN to do a fundamental reassessment of itself as well.

In that regard, I am encouraged by the firm steps already taken by the UN's new Secretary-General. In New York, in January, I had the opportunity to renew acquaintances with Dr. Boutros-Ghali in his new capacity. We had a full and fruitful discussion with a definite meeting of minds on the need to streamline the organization. This sentiment was echoed during the Security Council Summit at the end of that month.

On February 7, Dr. Boutros-Ghali announced a rationalization in the structure of the Secretariat that will result in the elimination of 14 senior positions. It is hoped that this "de-layering" will be the precursor of much more far-reaching reforms throughout the system, which will leave us with a UN with clear goals rather than a commitment to avoiding change.

One of those changes, and we are still hoping to see some positive move by Dr. Boutros-Ghali in this regard, would be to increase the number of women appointed to senior positions at the UN.

Another of the issues alluded to at the Summit was that of Security Council reform. Any changes to the membership of the Council -- when they come, as they eventually must -- should reflect current realities. But they must keep engaged those players who can make a real difference to the effectiveness of the organization.

This will not be an easy task and should not be undertaken at the expense of the efficiency and the momentum of the current Security Council. It has, in recent years, been performing with magnificent effect -- as envisaged in the Charter in 1945 -- and Canada wishes to ensure that it continues to do so.

While the problems facing the UN are both more numerous and more significant than ever before, the need to retain the viability of the organization by overcoming these challenges is also greater than ever.

Our commitment to the UN has not wavered throughout its history, and, as a result, we play a role there that is larger than our size and wealth would suggest. As John Holmes has said: "As a unilateral crusader, Canada can achieve little; as a constructive builder of coalitions, we can make a real difference."

You, in many ways, epitomize the support that Canada has always shown for this unique organization among organizations. It is also why in our current constitutional debate we must bear in mind that it is not just the future of Canada at stake, but the future of a nation -- our nation -- which has had historically a civilizing effect internationally and a real contribution to make to the world.

We count on you to continue to raise public awareness of the singular role that the United Nations can and will play in all of our lives, and of the need for all of us to become involved to ensure that it reaches its full potential for the benefit of all the citizens of the world.