

Special Debate

without looking for ways to introduce conditions that are favourable to reconstruction and rehabilitation of the countries in that area.

The Somali crisis is one example of the need for better co-ordination of humanitarian aid. That is why Canada fully supported creating a department of humanitarian affairs within the UN, while contributing to the central emergency fund set up last December.

I could say a lot more, but I will finish my speech. It is in that perspective that we should see the decision made by the Government of Canada on December 4 this year to take part in operations approved by the Security Council for the delivery of humanitarian aid in Somalia. As a member of this government and as a citizen of a strong, free and democratic country, I fully support this delicate operation and I recognize its historic impact.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House that although the attention of the whole world is now focused on the crisis in Somalia, other nations need international aid and original solutions. I am thinking, for instance, of Mozambique, Angola and the Sudan. Canada must continue to do its fair share within the international community and find long-term solutions to long, drawn out conflicts, especially in African countries.

[English]

Hon. David MacDonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate and, even more, I welcome the opportunity for the debate itself to occur. I have listened carefully to a number of the speeches. I must say that I am a bit concerned at the outset at the attempt to state that we are in some ways not allowing sufficient opportunity for this matter to be debated.

I have heard very few questions in this House raised over the past few months on this issue. It is not only in this House. We have many committees in which this matter could be more effectively and more consistently pursued. I would invite all members of the House to make further and greater use of that because the issues at stake in Somalia are not ones that by themselves can be simply sorted out in a few minutes in the general debate.

One of the things that I think is important to remember in all of this is that at the centre of the present

tragedy of Somalia today is the situation in which complete chaos has occurred in the context of high-tech weaponry. Somebody should ask the question: Where did all these weapons come from? They were not manufactured in Somali basements or in garages or somewhere within that country itself.

One only has to review a bit of the history to know that in the 1970s a major conflict erupted between Somalia and Ethiopia in an attempt by the Somalis to regain territory that they thought was rightfully theirs in the Ogaden. Unfortunately, and I will not go into the details this evening, the arming that took place of Somalia, first by the Soviet Union and later by the United States, has left its tragic legacy in that country. There has been increasing concern, particularly since the Iraq war, about the way in which the arms race seems to go on unabated with or without the cold war. We are again seeing the latest manifestation of that in Somalia.

I would hope that members on all sides would pursue this issue much more aggressively beyond this single debate this evening.

The situation in Somalia will not be resolved easily. My colleague from Winnipeg has proposed a slight amendment to the original motion talking about an enduring secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia. I am not sure that the amendment is quite what the member intends. If it is, I believe it is only going to contribute further to a fundamental problem that we face not just in Somalia but indeed throughout the Horn of Africa and in other parts of the world.

We have become very good, even though I say so myself, at humanitarian gestures and actions. We heard in the recent statement by the parliamentary secretary of the extent to which Canada has consistently responded with humanitarian assistance, but humanitarian assistance is not the solution to the problems of Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, any of the countries you want to mention where there has been and continues to be internal conflict. The problem in all of these countries is much more long term, much more associated with the fundamental and grinding poverty that existed for far too long and, I would have to say, by the patterns of international economic activity and sometimes external great power conflicts which do their own damage to the ultimate fabric of these societies.