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THE SITUATION IN THE CONGO

Statement by Mr. W.B. Nesbitt, Vice-Chairman,
Canadian Delegation to the United Nations,
in the General Assembly, April 4, 1961.

... When this Assembly adjourned three months ago, it was in an atmosphere of deep concern over the course of events in the Congo. There is no need for me to review the developments of the intervening period. Some have been tragic. Some have been profoundly disquieting in their implications. Few have given much ground for satisfaction or for optimism. If there is one encouraging sign to be found, it is perhaps the evidence there has been in this debate of widespread concern to find a real and lasting solution to the problems which beset the Congo. Encouragement can be found in this fact, I believe, even though we cannot ignore, at the same time, the evidence of deep and fundamental disagreement over the direction in which any solution should be sought.

There is not, of course, just one single Congo problem. There are at least three Congo problems, and in one of these, I am happy to say, the United Nations and its Agencies, with help from governments and other outside sources, have been outstandingly successful, and have earned the whole-hearted appreciation of the Congolese authorities. This is the whole field of social, economic and technical matters in which the United Nations civilian operations in the Congo have been functioning quietly and efficiently: bringing emergency relief, combatting famine conditions, assisting medical and health services, helping to restore communications, and co-operating in a wide variety of other technical and administrative fields. In our concern with the more intractable aspects of the Congo problem we must not lose sight of these successes, or fail to pay tribute to the devoted and unselfish efforts which have made them possible.

The other two main Congo problems are what might be called in general terms the military problem, and the political problem. Both present unusual features, so far as the United Nations is concerned, largely because of the fact that "The Situation in the Republic of the Congo" - as it appears on the Assembly's agenda - is to an important extent the internal problem of a sovereign state. The United Nations, with its strong awareness - written clearly into the Charter - of the limitations which apply when matters of domestic jurisdiction are involved, has had no previous experience with exactly this type of problem. No such situation was envisaged, indeed, when the Charter was drafted.