

Thus, Canada has, over the years, been deeply involved in economic development programs in the countries of the region. We intend to continue this commitment, as well as our tradition of generous humanitarian assistance to the victims of both natural and man-made disasters.

Canada commends those who have been active in the decisions that have moved the process to this stage. As the co-sponsors of this historic process, the United States and Russia have demonstrated real perseverance and dedication in the face of serious problems. They will have Canada's continued strong support.

We also commend the parties directly involved. Leaders of the countries and peoples represented have already shown -- by their actions -- the vision and courage necessary to break the barriers built by decades of mistrust. They have taken this opportunity to sit down together, to begin to talk about building a peaceful Middle East. Ultimately, they will carry the burden of failure or the banner of success. It is the future of their children, and their peoples, that is at stake.

We also welcome the representatives of other states of the Middle East region who are joining this process for the first time. The breadth of vision and commitment to a peaceful future which their participation here today demonstrates is a portent of a promising tomorrow.

Mr. Chairmen, we recognize that some, whose participation is central to the establishment of peace in the Middle East, are not here today. We regret their absence and we continue to urge them to join fully in a process that we are convinced represents the best chance for peace.

We remain deeply concerned about the continuing threats to the process, caused by violence and intimidation, often by persons opposed to the concept of negotiation. We strongly urge those who genuinely support the process to maintain and strengthen their resistance to those efforts to sabotage it.

In particular, we call on all sides to speak clearly, with one voice, to reject violence and to avoid provocative words and actions. The reward that these negotiations offer is a very precious one and the price of failure is too serious to be risked.

Mr Chairmen, for too long the problems that have divided Arabs and Israelis in the Middle East have sustained an environment of insecurity, misery, hopelessness and fear. The negotiations that lie ahead will be long and arduous. Serious fundamental problems must be addressed in the direct bilateral negotiations. But we also believe that the international community has a role to play in helping the parties address some of the broader questions which affect the region as a whole. Canada also believes that the