

Nations and its agencies. Without the trepidation and reluctance which had marked its earlier international forays, Canada assumed the responsibilities associated with its eminent status in the international community. Thus, in New York, in 1947, Canada was elected by the General Assembly to its first two-year term as a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council.

Even though, during that first decade, there were many challenges to the United Nations, the organisation nevertheless acted as a catalyst of important initiatives on the world stage. To cite but one example: the paralysis of the Security Council fostered the development of the North Atlantic Treaty as an alternative approach to the concept of "collective security" which was only vaguely defined in the Charter of the UN.

Beyond the critical role of the UN in the sensitive area of collective global security during those first years – I think in particular of the military action of the United Nations in the Korean peninsula – the United Nations soon became a catalyst of major historical development in other essential areas as well.

The adoption by the General Assembly, in 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a major milestone both in international relations and in the history of human and civil rights.

In 1945, it was thought that decolonisation would be likely to take at least seventy years. With the UN as catalyst the process was virtually completed in twenty-five years.

Many distinguished Canadians played vital and constructive roles in these spectacular developments. For example, John Humphrey was a leading architect of the Universal Declaration. Paul Martin's creative initiative broke a debilitating and frustrating logjam over membership of newly independent nations in the UN. These and other significant contributions by Canadians, early in the history of the Organisation, helped to ensure the relevance of the United Nations to the international community and brought it closer to the ideal of a truly universal body.

Canadians were also justifiably proud when their new spirit of international involvement and cooperation culminated in the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Lester Pearson for his efforts to resolve the Suez Crisis of 1956 under the umbrella of the United Nations. "Peacekeeping" which was not even mentioned in the Charter thus became and remains a household word associated with the UN mainly as a result of the efforts of a great Canadian.

It is worth noting that, although the issue of Suez divided the principal political parties in Canada at the time, our country's overall commitment to the United Nations as an institution, and to peacekeeping as a crucial activity of that institution, was endorsed wholeheartedly by the government of John Diefenbaker. When the Prime Minister addressed the UN General Assembly in 1957, he described "support of the United Nations" as "...the cornerstone of [Canada's] foreign policy."