

Thank you, and welcome to Ottawa.

It is a pleasure to welcome representatives of many of those countries which, like Canada, have displayed a real commitment to peacekeeping over many years. As I look at the wide variety of nations represented around this room, I am reminded just how truly international an activity peacekeeping is. You represent a sample of the 70 countries that now participate in United Nations peacekeeping activities.

I extend a special greeting to the representatives of the United Nations who are here for this event. We owe them a special debt of gratitude. In spite of an incredibly busy schedule, they have taken the time to prepare the papers which will serve as the basis for your considerations here in Ottawa.

In particular, I would like to pay tribute to Mr. Koffi Annan, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping. We are delighted that, in spite of his hectic schedule, he has been able to join us for our meeting and to lend his leadership to our discussions. This is, in fact, the second time in three months that Mr. Annan has travelled to Canada. He very kindly did so a few months ago to brief new members of Canada's Parliament on the UN's peacekeeping activities and objectives.

Mr. Annan and his colleagues carry a heavy burden on their shoulders. They are responsible for both the effectiveness of the 16 peacekeeping operations which the UN maintains the world over, and for the well-being of the over 70 000 troops assigned to these missions and the UN field personnel assigned to these operations. His dedication to the attainment of the UN's goals in support of international peace and security are a matter of record and are deeply appreciated by the Canadian Government. We are also very proud that Major-General Maurice Baril serves as Military Advisor to the Secretary-General within Mr. Annan's Department.

In noting the range of people here, I am reminded of the fact that no one nation or organization has a monopoly on peacekeeping, or on ideas as to how it might be made a more effective tool of international security. Only by working together, sharing our experiences and thoughts, can we ensure that peacekeeping adapts to the changing international scene.

Plus ça change.... Thirty years ago, another meeting just like this one took place in Ottawa. Then, as now, a group of experts met to discuss aspects of UN peacekeeping operations. Then, 22 countries were represented, along with the UN Secretariat; here today 24 countries are represented, along with members of the UN Secretariat. Then, as now, attention was focussed on such issues as whether to create UN stand-by forces; the need for advance planning by the UN, including training and operating procedures; and, the importance of clarifying lines of authority among UN forces in the field, the UN Secretary-General and contributing member-states. The similarities in agendas are indeed remarkable.