

Mr. Speaker of the Senate,  
Mr. Speaker of the House of Commons,  
Mrs. Fairbairn,  
Mr. Dingwall,  
Mr. Clermont,  
Mr. Roche,  
Mr. Oliver,  
Distinguished guests:

It is a pleasure for me to be here this afternoon and to represent the Prime Minister at this ceremony. Today we mark an important event: the 50th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations. I regard this as an important occasion not only for the UN but for Canada.

As Mr. Chrétien stressed before the world leaders who gathered in New York to celebrate this event last weekend, during the past 50 years our country and our citizens have played a role of which we can be proud in the service of peace and the United Nations.

I am pleased today to be able to personally salute some of my fellow citizens, and once again thank them. Whether they work in the humanitarian, social, political or environmental sectors, they all contribute to building the UN system. Peace does not depend on efforts in one field exclusively; it is the result of efforts undertaken in all sectors of human activity.

Today, as we contemplate the achievements and turmoil of the past 50 years, one thing is clear. The UN is truly a universal organization, not so much because almost all countries are members of it but because it is involved in all fields of human endeavour.

The range extends from peacekeeping to peace building, education and the war on poverty; from human rights to development, environment, health, help to refugees and programs to promote economic stability and growth; from efforts in democratization to initiatives of technology sharing and improvements in agriculture and food.

Fifty years ago, the first signatories of the UN Charter were gathered together in San Francisco to bring about their vision of hope for humanity.

As the stamp we have just unveiled recalls, it was one of our greatest prime ministers - Mackenzie King - who signed the Charter on behalf of Canada.

Amidst the ruins of a devastated world, our predecessors firmly believed that all of humanity could and had to build itself a better future. They also knew that peace and development must be not just for a few countries but for all the planet and all its peoples.