

A. GENERAL DEBATE

Sessions of the General Assembly begin each year with a General Debate. Virtually all members of the international community take this opportunity to present their views on the major international issues of the day. In a statement delivered September 26, 1977, the Honourable Don Jamieson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, expressed the views of Canada.

* * * *

I am pleased to be one of the first speakers to congratulate you on your election, which my delegation regards as a tribute both to your personal qualities and to the important role your country has played in the United Nations. In agreeing to preside not only over our annual deliberations this autumn, you have accepted a heavy responsibility. I know you will fulfil it with distinction.

This year we welcome two new members to the Assembly, the Republic of Djibouti and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. As a member of the Security Council, Canada was pleased to recommend both countries for membership, and we look forward to working with them in this organization.

Effectiveness of the U.N.

Like others who will participate in this debate, I have received much advice on what I should say that might be helpful in solving the many problems we face. It has been a frustrating experience.

I have concluded that I could read my last year's speech again, word for word, and no one would notice the repetition, nor would they care! The sad truth is that every serious issue I and many others raised last year remains unresolved and some now pose a greater threat to peace and security than they did 12 months ago. It has not been a good year for the United Nations.

Small wonder that our deliberations have so little relevance for our publics back home or for the many millions around the world whom we are committed to help but who have become disillusioned and cynical about our ability to find answers to what are in many cases, matters of life and death.

I make these judgements with regret. No country has been more consistent than Canada in supporting the principles of the United Nations. We do not have to apologize for our record here or for the attitude of the Canadian people in accepting responsibilities for peacekeeping, for leadership in the North-South dialogue and for making a fair contribution to all U.N. initiatives. Canada and Canadians have earned the right to be heard and what Canadians are saying is that the performance of the United Nations is not good enough.