

Mr Chairmen, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that Canada joins today in this historic inauguration of multilateral Middle East negotiations. These will address the regional issues which must be dealt with in order to build stability in the Middle East.

Our thanks and congratulations go to our host, Russia, which has provided such a warm and friendly welcome and has made a success of the remarkable task of organizing this conference so soon after its independence as a separate country.

We are committed to making a constructive contribution to the resolution of a situation that has troubled the world for decades. The approach being encouraged is fully consistent with Canada's concept of "co-operative security," that is, that true peace and security depend on comprehensive dialogue and co-operation among all concerned.

Although Canada is far from the Middle East, there are links of history, commerce, culture, family contacts and religion that have created among Canadians an abiding concern for, and involvement in, the region.

Indeed, since the Second World War, there has been an active engagement by my country in helping to resolve the problems of the region. Canada has worked continuously, both within the United Nations and in other fora, to help establish more favourable conditions for peace in the Middle East and for justice for all the peoples of the region.

Canada's support for the well-being and security of Israel has always been in the forefront of our policy respecting the Middle East. We welcome the new sense of worldwide recognition of Israel that has developed over recent years. Canada supports as well the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, in the context of peace negotiations.

In our view, the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 remain the fundamental pillars on which agreement must be built.

Canada has contributed to every UN peacekeeping force in the Middle East. I, myself, have visited our peacekeeping forces in the region and bear witness to their dedication.

Canadian forces are still present on the Golan, in Kuwait, and in the Sinai, in addition to Canadian military observers who continue their role as members of the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in several countries of the region.

Peace and justice require more than security, however. Canada has long believed that economic development is a fundamental requirement for true stability in the Middle East.