

Mr. President,

I join with others in offering you my congratulations on the assumption of your important duties as President of the General Assembly. I am confident that your wisdom and experience will enable you to build on the proud accomplishments of your distinguished predecessors. Our ranks have increased since last year's general debate, and the United Nations family has now been enriched by the accession of seven new members: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, North Korea, South Korea, the Marshall Islands, and Micronesia. To the representatives of these seven states, I would like to extend both a warm welcome and a pledge of Canada's continuing co-operation.

We meet this year at a time of opportunity and challenge. The pace and direction of events of the past few months have, in general terms, augured well for a more secure and more equitable world order, and for the ultimate triumph of a world dedicated to the rule of law. But progress has presented challenges. One revolution after another has unleashed long-simmering ethnic rivalries. The changes shaking the Soviet Union have exposed the fault lines of persistent economic and social tensions. Civil strife in Yugoslavia threatens the new peace of Europe. And growing numbers of people flee their countries of origin in the wake of instability, natural disasters or relentless poverty.

The challenge to the international community is one of adaptation, from a world centred on the individual nation-state to an interdependent world, from a world dominated by bilateral diplomacy to one in which multilateral institutions occupy a central place.

Our adaptation at a time of revolutionary change must be both national and international.

Canada is now in the process of making that kind of essential adaptation, in the face of domestic challenges. And it includes a fundamental discussion of our most basic internal political structures. The Government of Canada is unshakeable in its commitment to a prosperous and united Canada, and I am confident that Canadians will succeed in renewing our own Confederation through the spirit of flexibility, tolerance, compromise and optimism that we have always brought to this organization and to our many other international activities. We owe this commitment to our own people -- and to a world searching for stability, security and leadership at a time of profound and sometimes wrenching change.

Adaptation must also come to the body of doctrine and law by which states have conducted their diplomacy for centuries. In Yugoslavia, where the forces of ethnic hatred have visited death and destruction upon hundreds of people, we must not allow the principle of non-intervention to impede an effective international response. The concept of sovereignty is